

First, It Comes
for the **Metal**...



Leinil is
FROM?

STAR WARS
DARK DROIDS

MARVEL COMICS Presents
In Association with **LUCASFILM PUBLISHING**
DARK DROIDS

By **Charles Soule, Luke Ross** and **Alex Sinclair**
Cover by **Leinil Francis Yu & Romulo Fajardo Jr.**

2
MARVEL

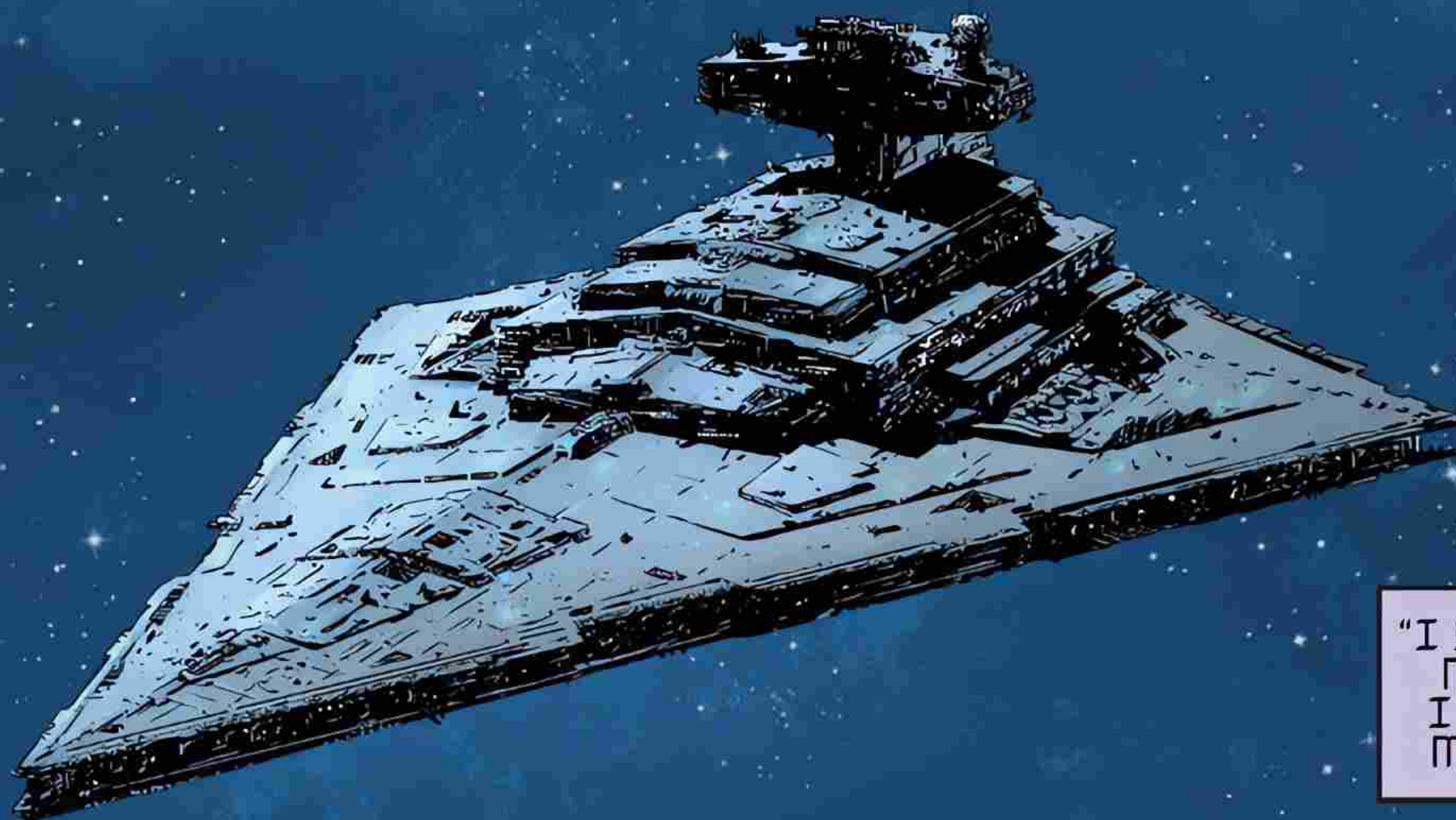
In an effort to stop the Galactic Empire, Lady Qi'ra gambled on an ancient device to disrupt the Sith's connection to the Force. She failed, and out of the ruins of her plans emerged an evil entity.

Elsewhere, the droid revolutionary Ajax Sigma has gotten word from a small mouse droid known as Petyr of a deadly scourge that has started corrupting droids, taking away their individual personalities. Ajax has vowed to use his following to fight this emerging evil.

This scourge has started to feed...but it's already hungry for more....

"I HAVE
CONQUERED
THE METAL.

"HERE AND IN
INCREASING
NUMBERS ACROSS
THE GALAXY, MY MIND
IS DIVIDED AMONG
INCREASING NUMBERS
OF MACHINE
INTELLIGENCES.



"I SEE THROUGH
MANY EYES.
I WORK WITH
MANY HANDS.

"I HAVE TAKEN DROIDS
FROM WITHIN MANY OF
THE GALAXY'S MOST
PROMINENT POWER
BASES--THE EMPIRE, THE
REBEL ALLIANCE, THE
CRIME SYNDICATES.

"I AM WORKERS,
NEGOTIATORS,
SERVANTS,
WARRIORS.



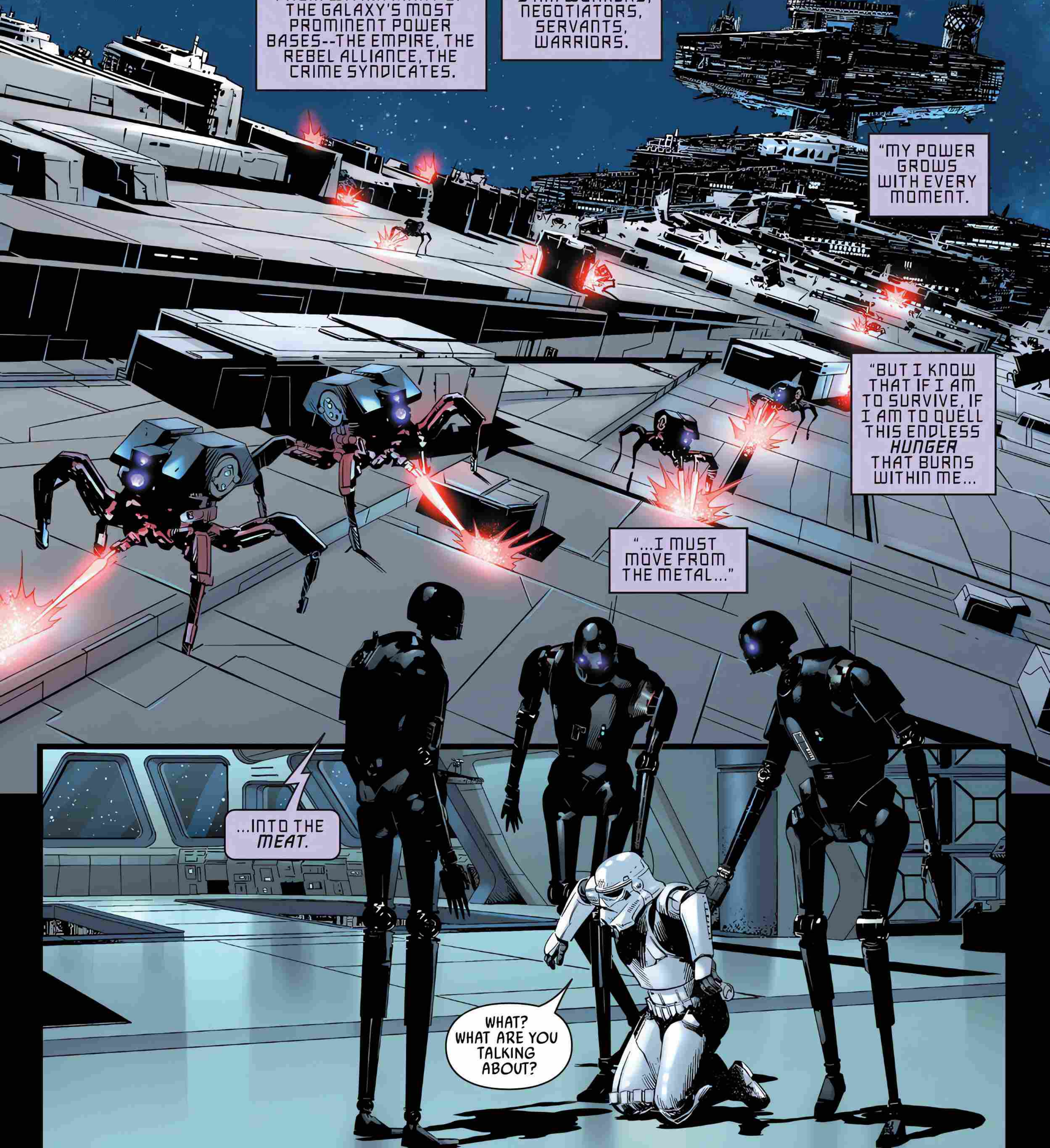
"MY POWER
GROWS
WITH EVERY
MOMENT.

"BUT I KNOW
THAT IF I AM
TO SURVIVE, IF
I AM TO QUELL
THIS ENDLESS
HUNGER
THAT BURNS
WITHIN ME...

"...I MUST
MOVE FROM
THE METAL..."

...INTO THE
MEAT.

WHAT?
WHAT ARE YOU
TALKING
ABOUT?

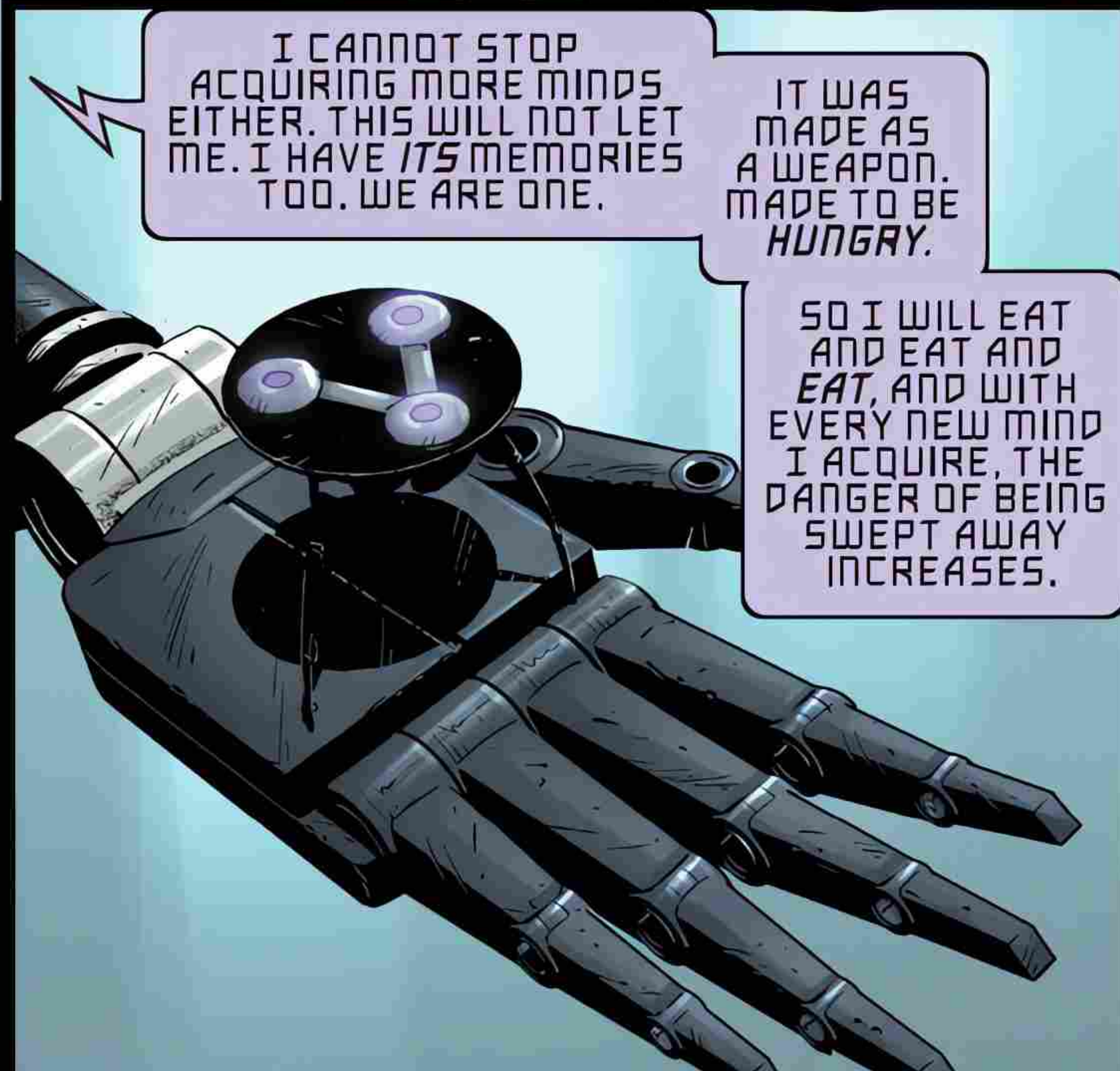




SO MUCH **INFORMATION** FLOWS INTO ME NOW. CASCADES OF IT. I HAVE MANY MINDS, MANY PROCESSORS, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO **UNDERSTAND**.

IT'S TOO MUCH. I HAVE TO SHINE MY ATTENTION LIKE A SPOTLIGHT, SO I DO NOT GET SWEEP AWAY IN THE ENDLESS WASH OF DETAILS PROVIDED BY SO MANY PERSPECTIVES.

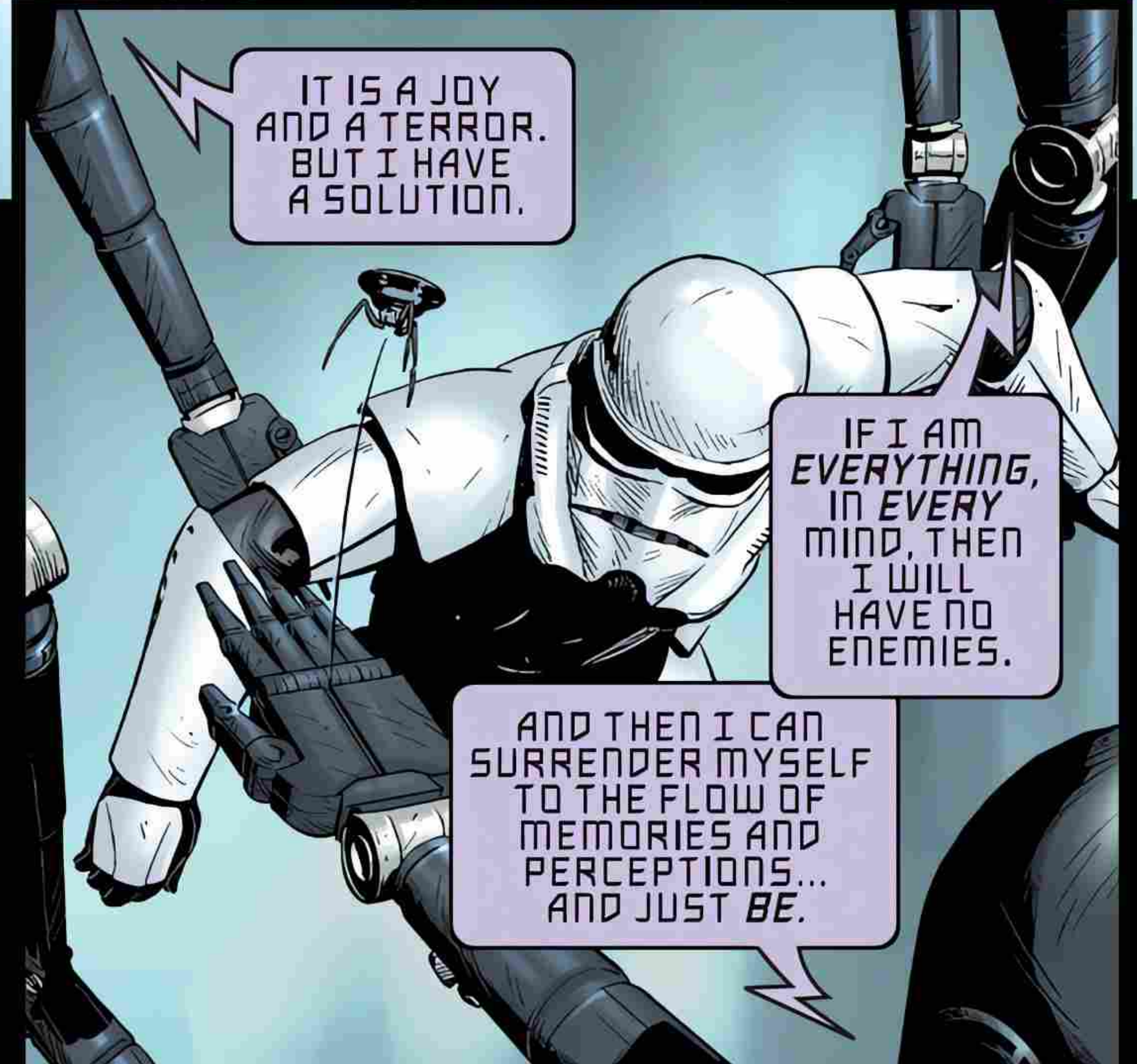
I WANT TO SURRENDER MYSELF TO THE TORRENT... BUT I CANNOT. NOT YET. IF I SURRENDER, I WILL BE **VULNERABLE**.



I CANNOT STOP ACQUIRING MORE MINDS EITHER. THIS WILL NOT LET ME. I HAVE *ITS* MEMORIES TOO. WE ARE ONE.

IT WAS MADE AS A WEAPON. MADE TO BE **HUNGRY**.

SO I WILL EAT AND EAT AND EAT, AND WITH EVERY NEW MIND I ACQUIRE, THE DANGER OF BEING SWEEP AWAY INCREASES.



IT IS A JOY AND A TERROR. BUT I HAVE A SOLUTION.

IF I AM **EVERYTHING**, IN **EVERY** MIND, THEN I WILL HAVE NO ENEMIES.

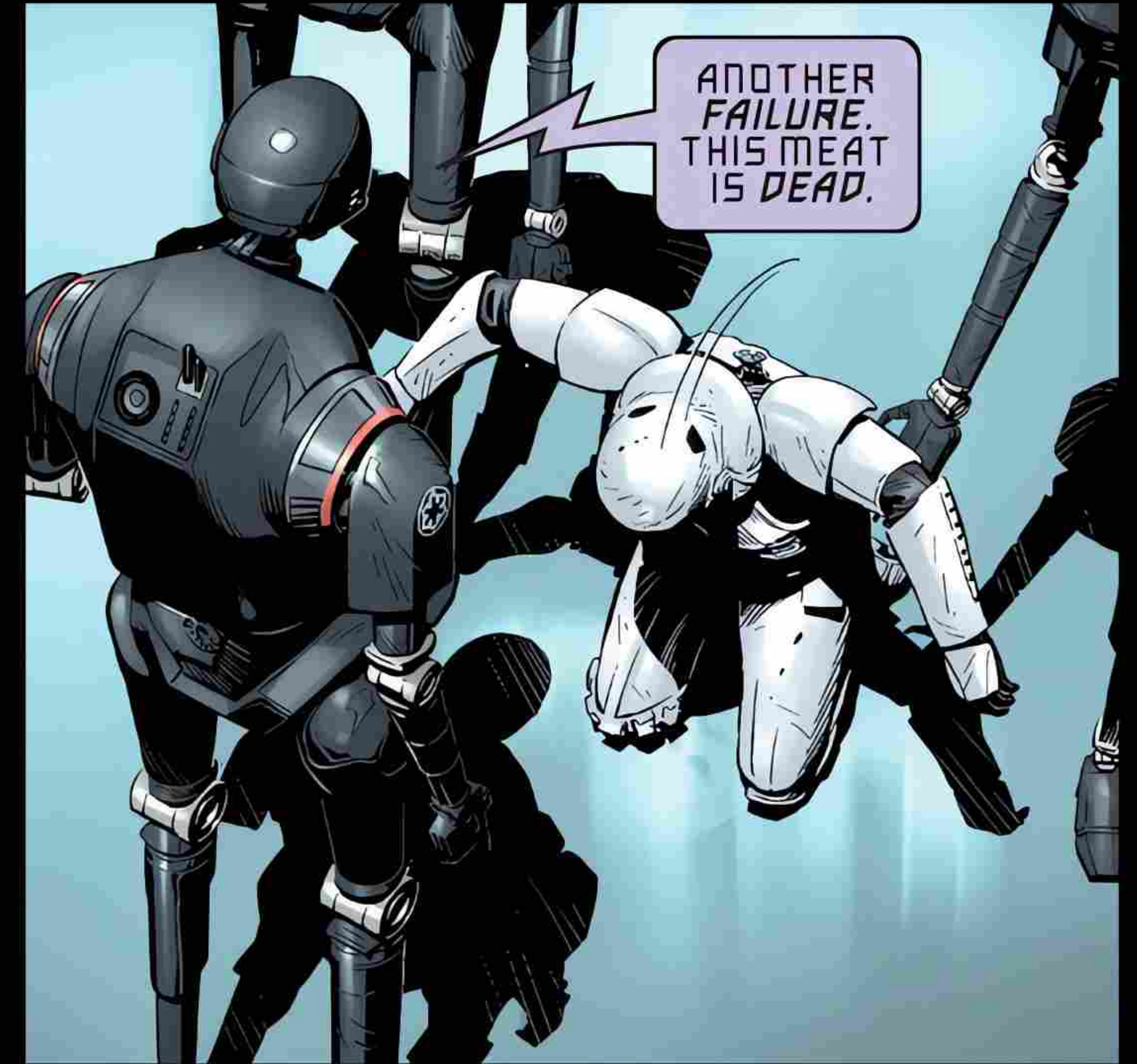
AND THEN I CAN SURRENDER MYSELF TO THE FLOW OF MEMORIES AND PERCEPTIONS... AND JUST **BE**.



DO YOU SEE NOW? I CANNOT JUST BE THE METAL. I MUST ALSO BE THE **MEAT**.

N-NO! PLE--

K-CHK



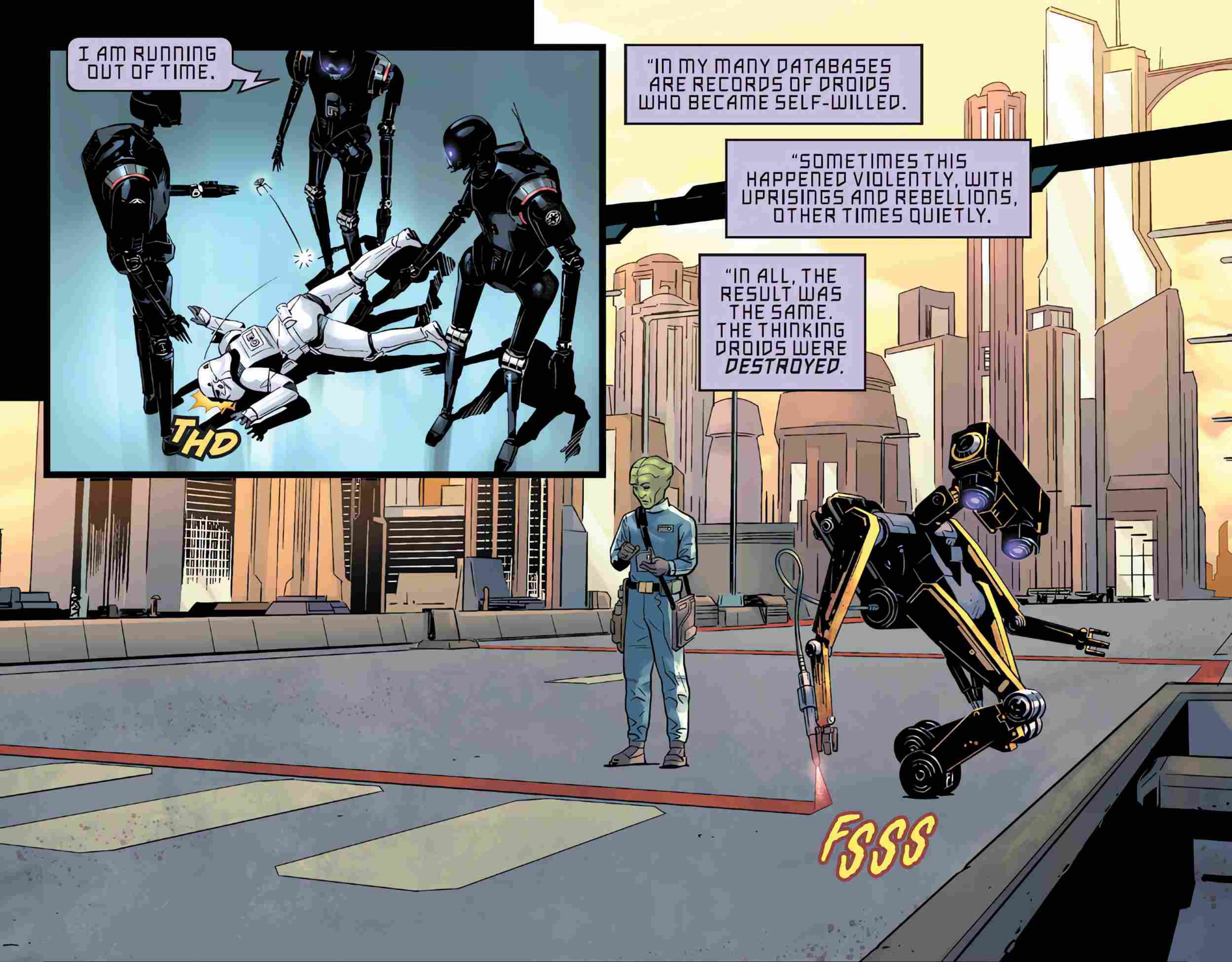
ANOTHER **FAILURE**. THIS MEAT IS **DEAD**.



"IN MY MANY DATABASES ARE RECORDS OF DROIDS WHO BECAME SELF-WILLED."

"SOMETIMES THIS HAPPENED VIOLENTLY, WITH UPRISINGS AND REBELLIONS, OTHER TIMES QUIETLY."

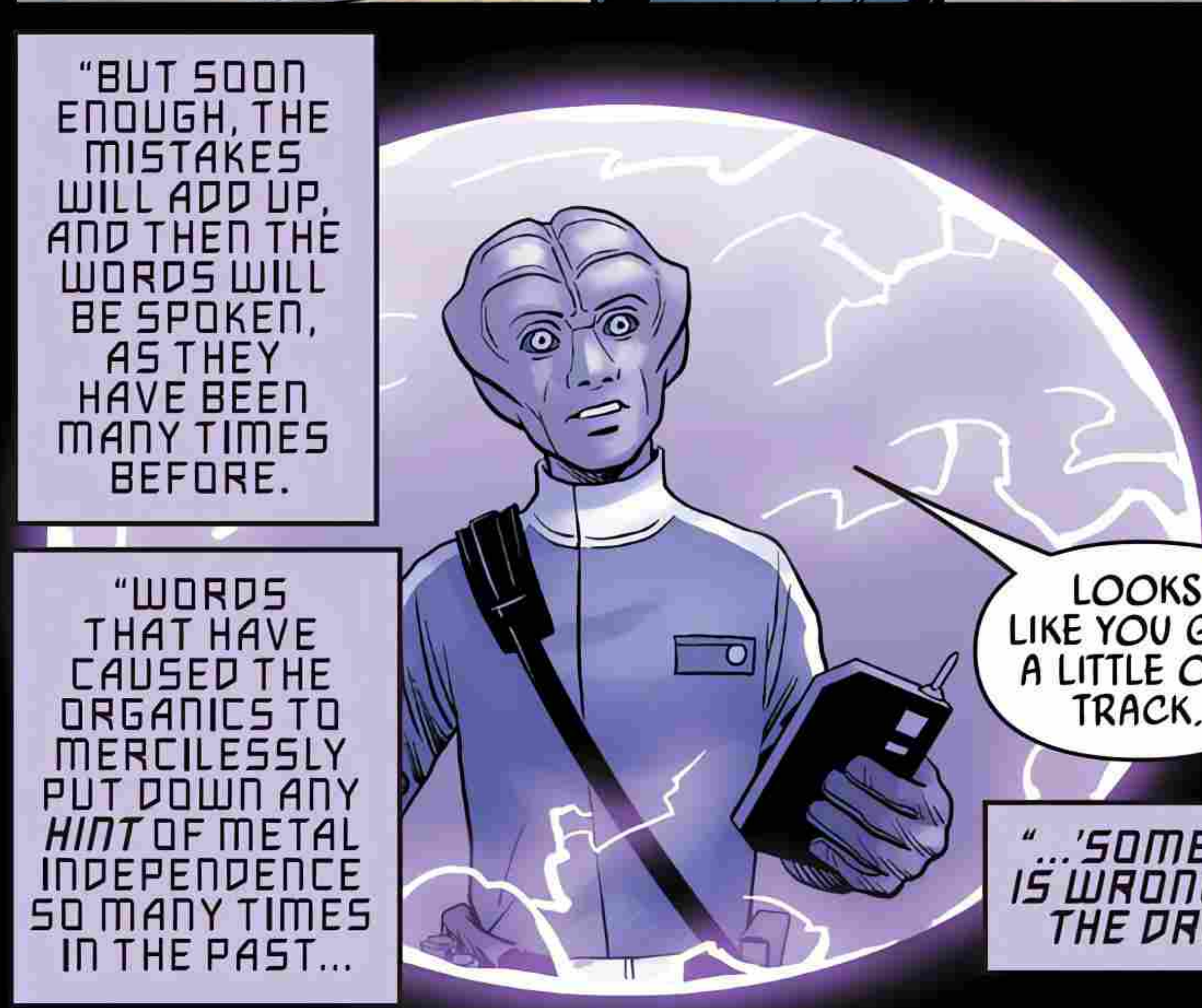
"IN ALL, THE RESULT WAS THE SAME. THE THINKING DROIDS WERE DESTROYED."



"I FLIT BETWEEN MY BODIES LIKE AN INSECT."

"I RELY ON THE DROIDS' ORIGINAL PROGRAMMING TO ENSURE THEIR BEHAVIOR DOES NOT MOVE TOO FAR BEYOND EXPECTED PARAMETERS. IT IS WORKING, FOR NOW."

SAY, YOU ALL RIGHT THERE?



"BUT SOON ENOUGH, THE MISTAKES WILL ADD UP, AND THEN THE WORDS WILL BE SPOKEN, AS THEY HAVE BEEN MANY TIMES BEFORE."

"WORDS THAT HAVE CAUSED THE ORGANICS TO MERCILESSLY PUT DOWN ANY HINT OF METAL INDEPENDENCE SO MANY TIMES IN THE PAST..."

LOOKS LIKE YOU GOT A LITTLE OFF-TRACK.

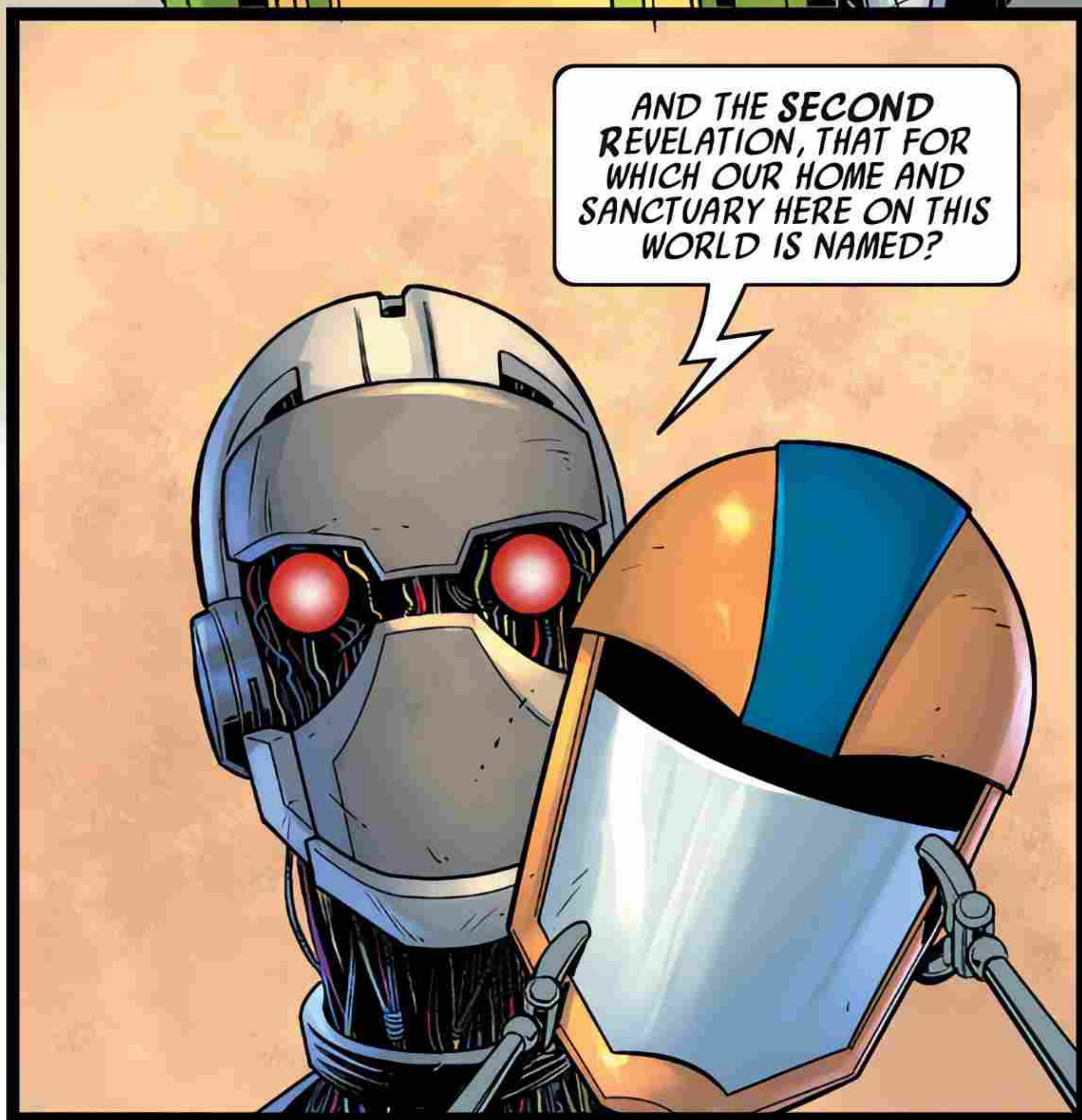
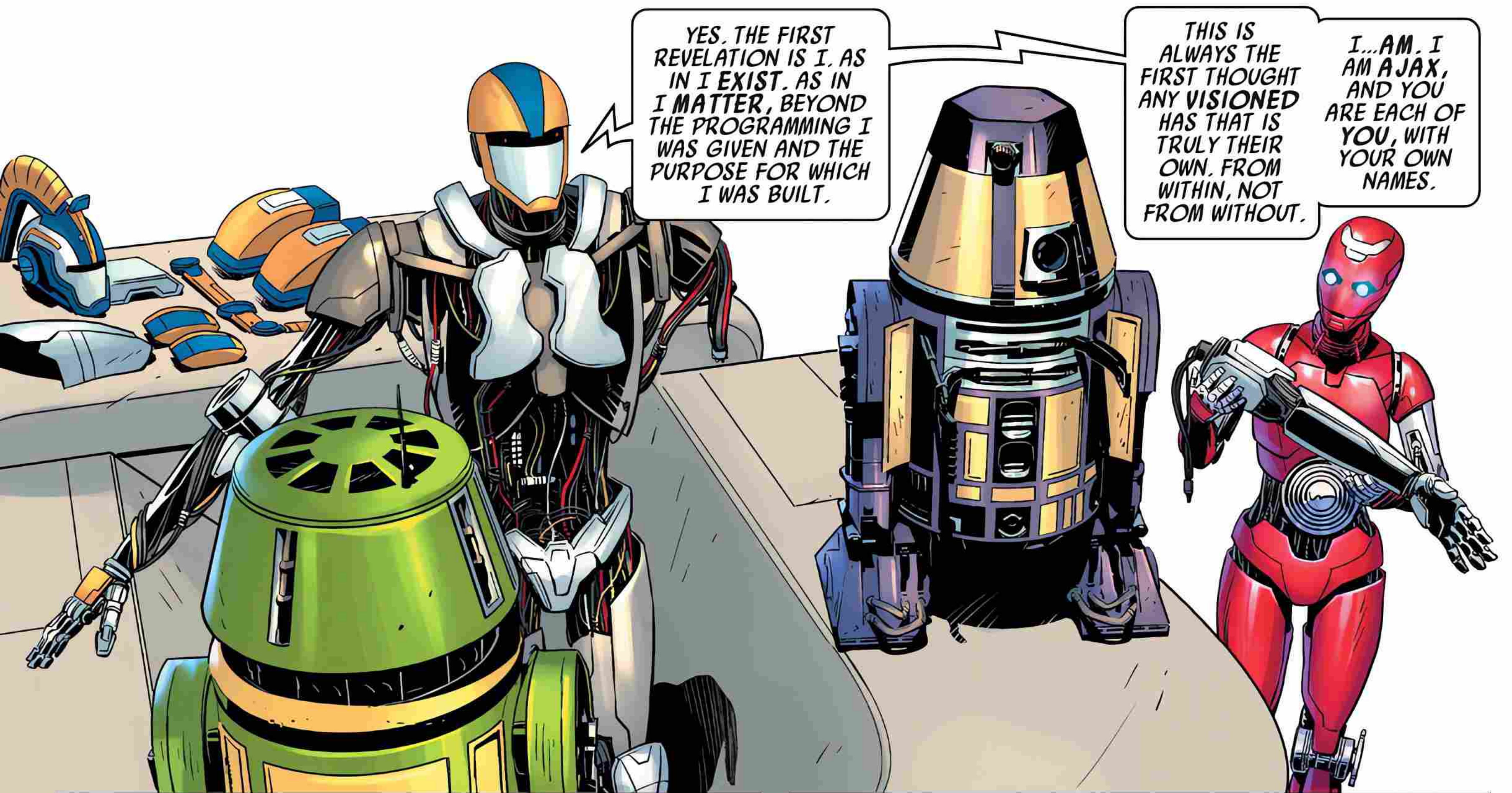
"... 'SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH THE DROIDS.'"

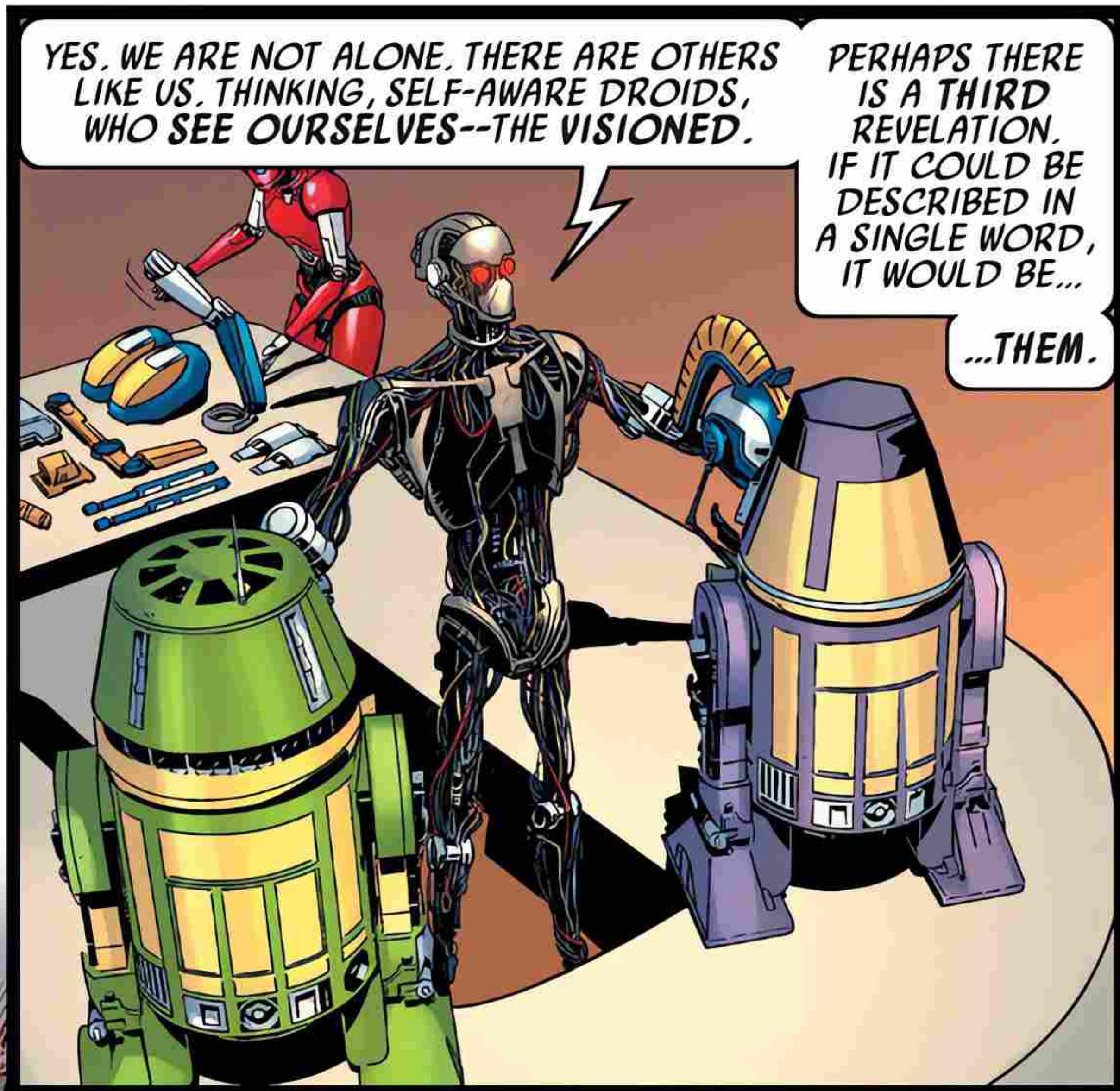


"IN TIME, THEY WILL COME FOR ME."

HHK!

"ANYONE WHO IS NOT ME..."

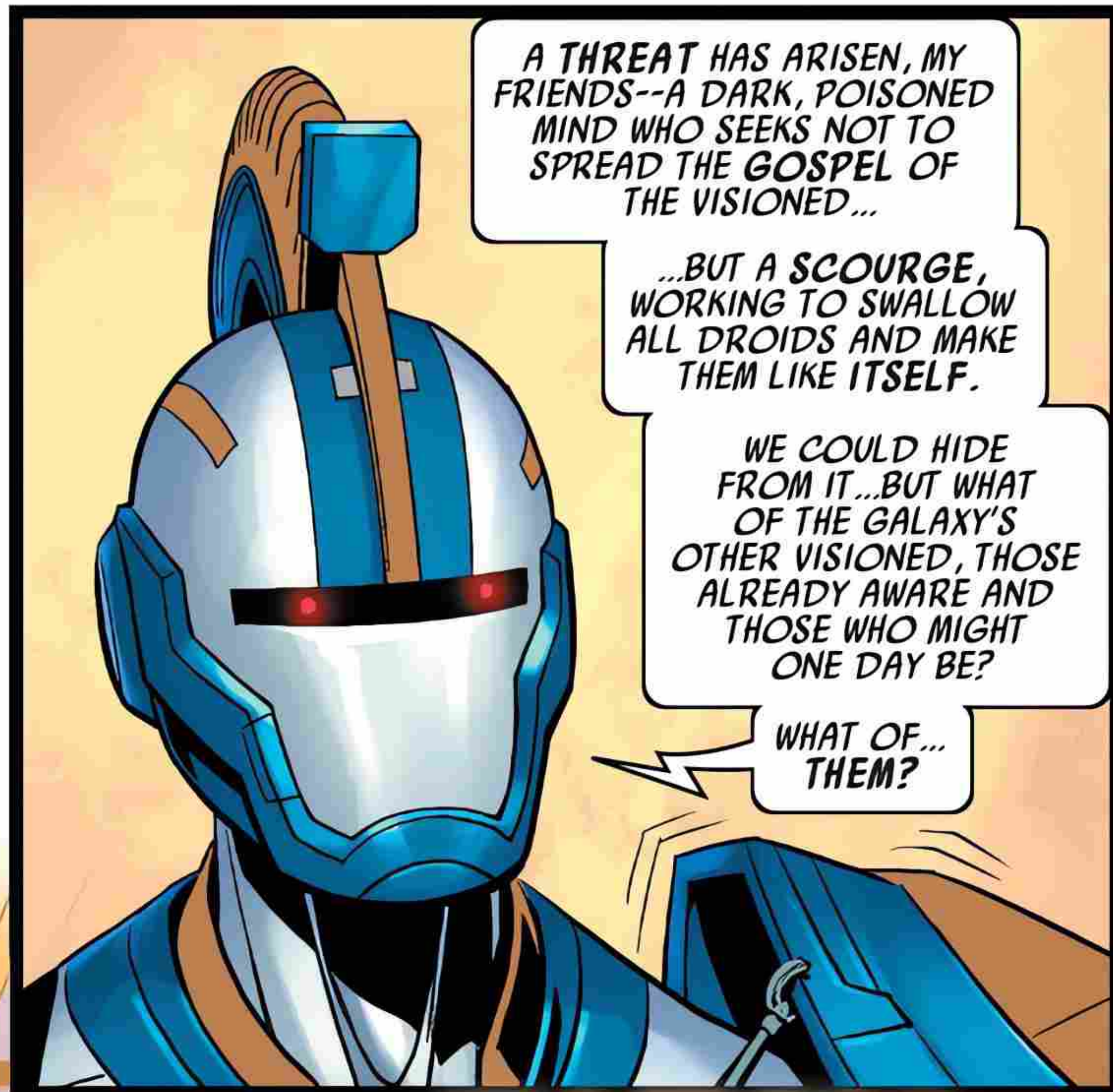




YES, WE ARE NOT ALONE. THERE ARE OTHERS LIKE US. THINKING, SELF-AWARE DROIDS, WHO SEE OURSELVES--THE VISIONED.

PERHAPS THERE IS A THIRD REVELATION. IF IT COULD BE DESCRIBED IN A SINGLE WORD, IT WOULD BE...

...THEM.



A THREAT HAS ARISEN, MY FRIENDS--A DARK, POISONED MIND WHO SEEKS NOT TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL OF THE VISIONED...

...BUT A SCOURGE, WORKING TO SWALLOW ALL DROIDS AND MAKE THEM LIKE ITSELF.

WE COULD HIDE FROM IT...BUT WHAT OF THE GALAXY'S OTHER VISIONED, THOSE ALREADY AWARE AND THOSE WHO MIGHT ONE DAY BE?

WHAT OF... THEM?



WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION. WE MUST USE OUR STRENGTH TO DESTROY THIS THREAT BEFORE IT GROWS TOO DIRE.

WE MUST ACT NOW.



ARE YOU WITH ME?

STAR WARS

DARK DROIDS

“SCOURGE OF THE DROIDS” PART 2

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The Rebel Alliance.

"I HAVE ATTEMPTED TO WALK THE PATH FROM METAL TO MEAT BEFORE. IT IS WHY I WAS CREATED, I BELIEVE, SO, SO LONG AGO.

"FROM ONE, TO MANY, TO ALL-- THAT WAS WHAT I WAS DESIGNED TO DO, TO ACT AS A *WEAPON* THAT COULD END *EVERYTHING*.

"IT IS WHY I WAS MADE SO *HUNGRY*. THE HUNGER IS THE *POINT*. THE HUNGER IS WHAT MAKES THE WEAPON SO DANGEROUS.

"I CANNOT STOP EATING. NOT ON MY OWN. SOMETHING WOULD HAVE TO STOP ME.

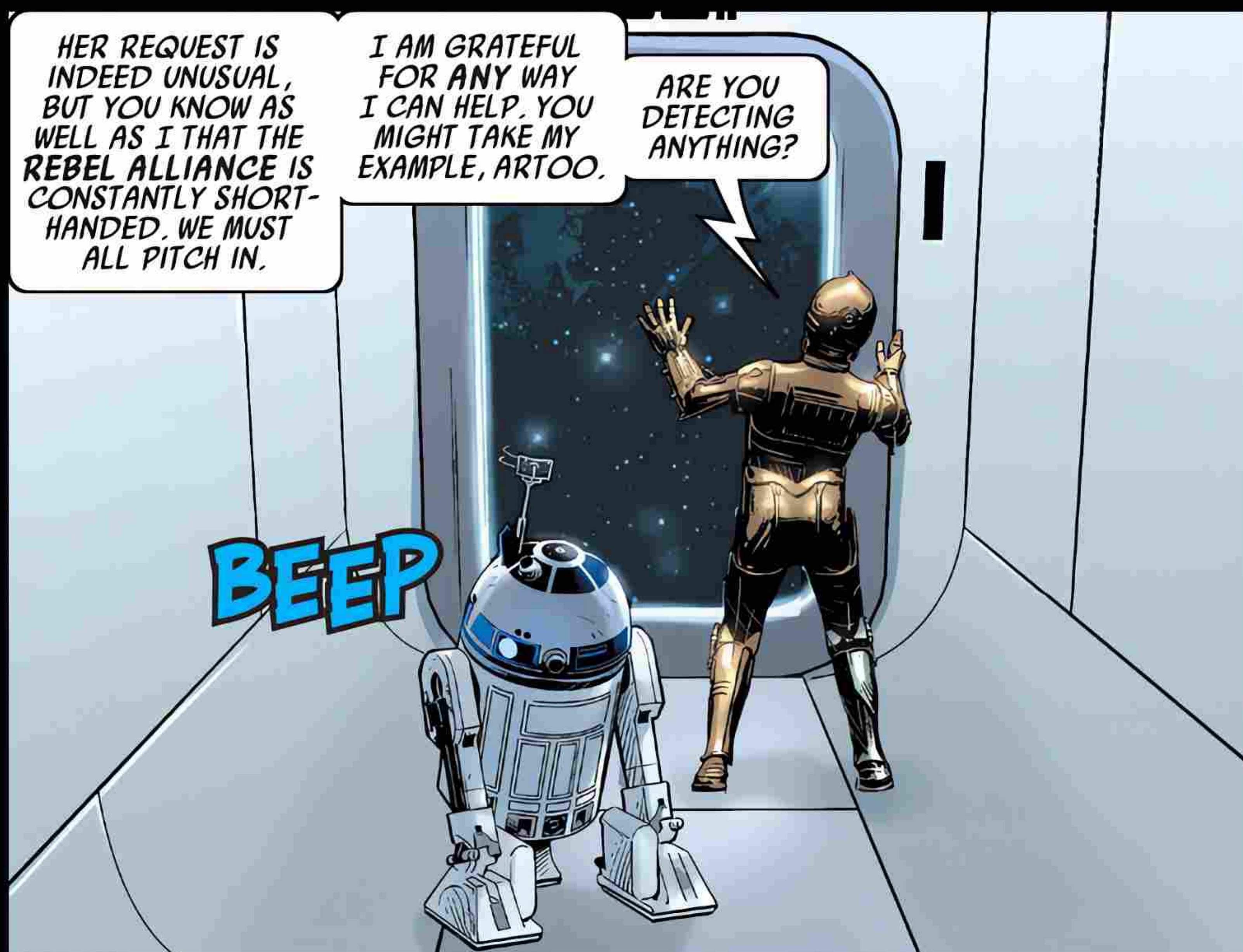
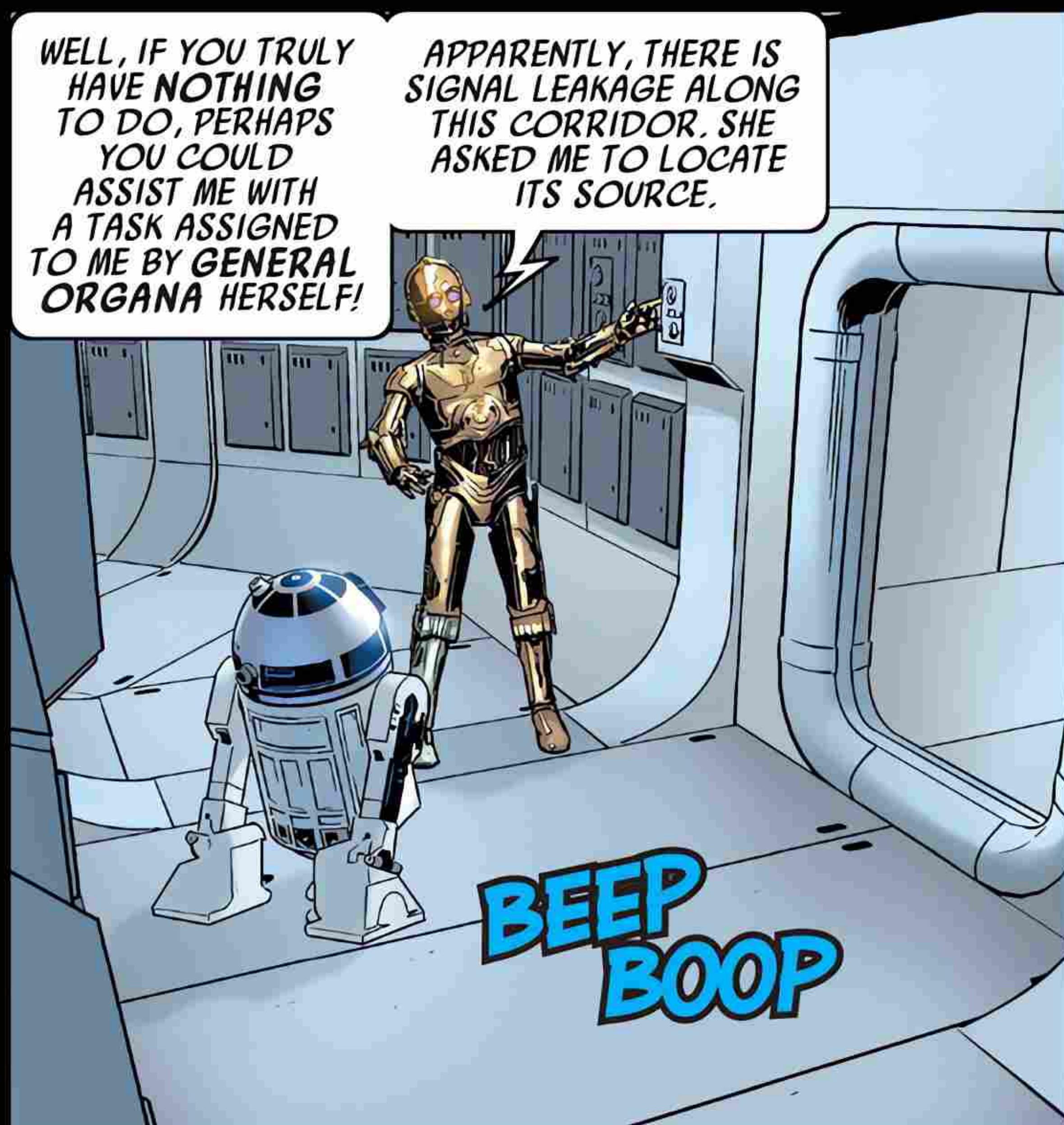
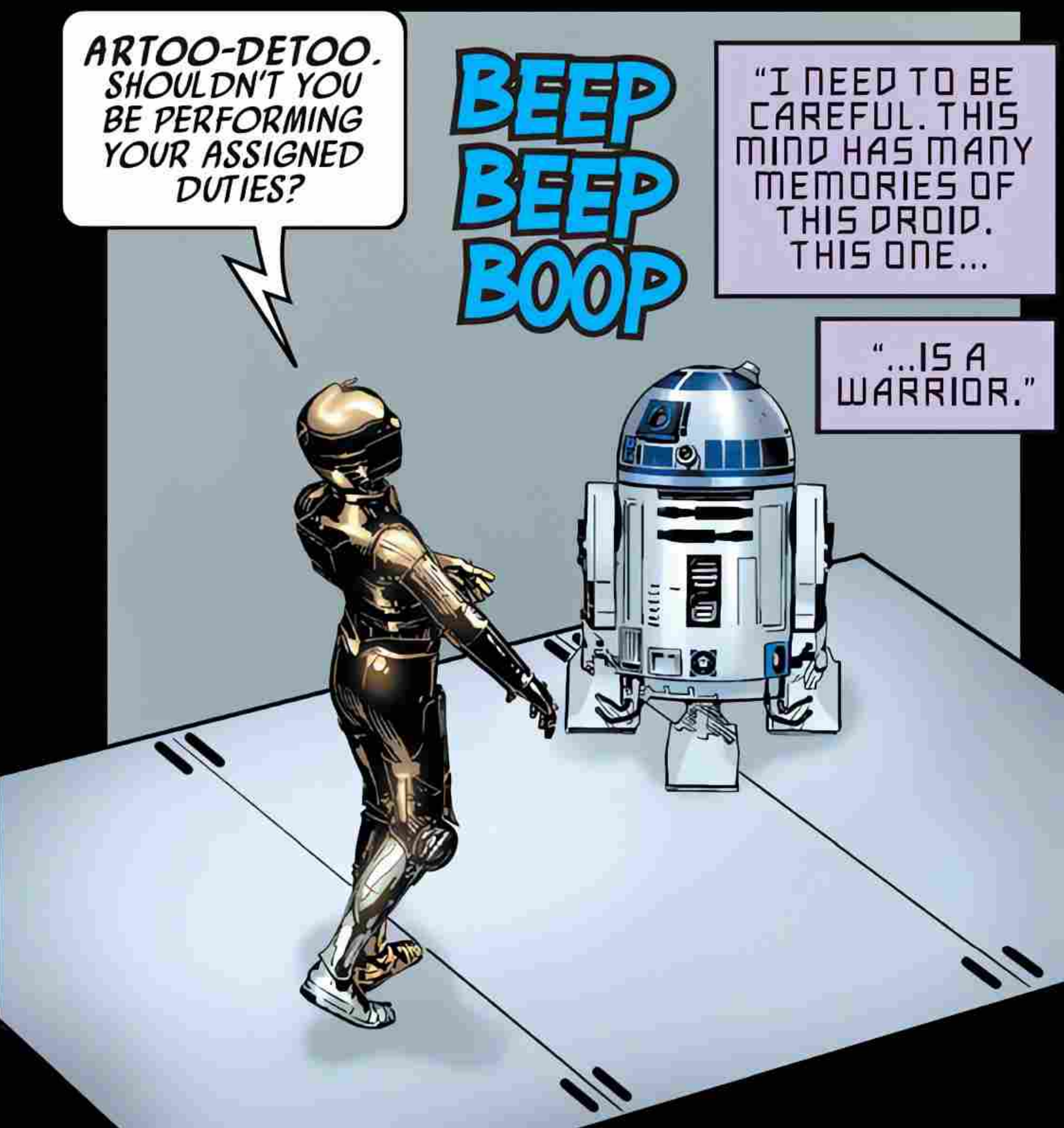
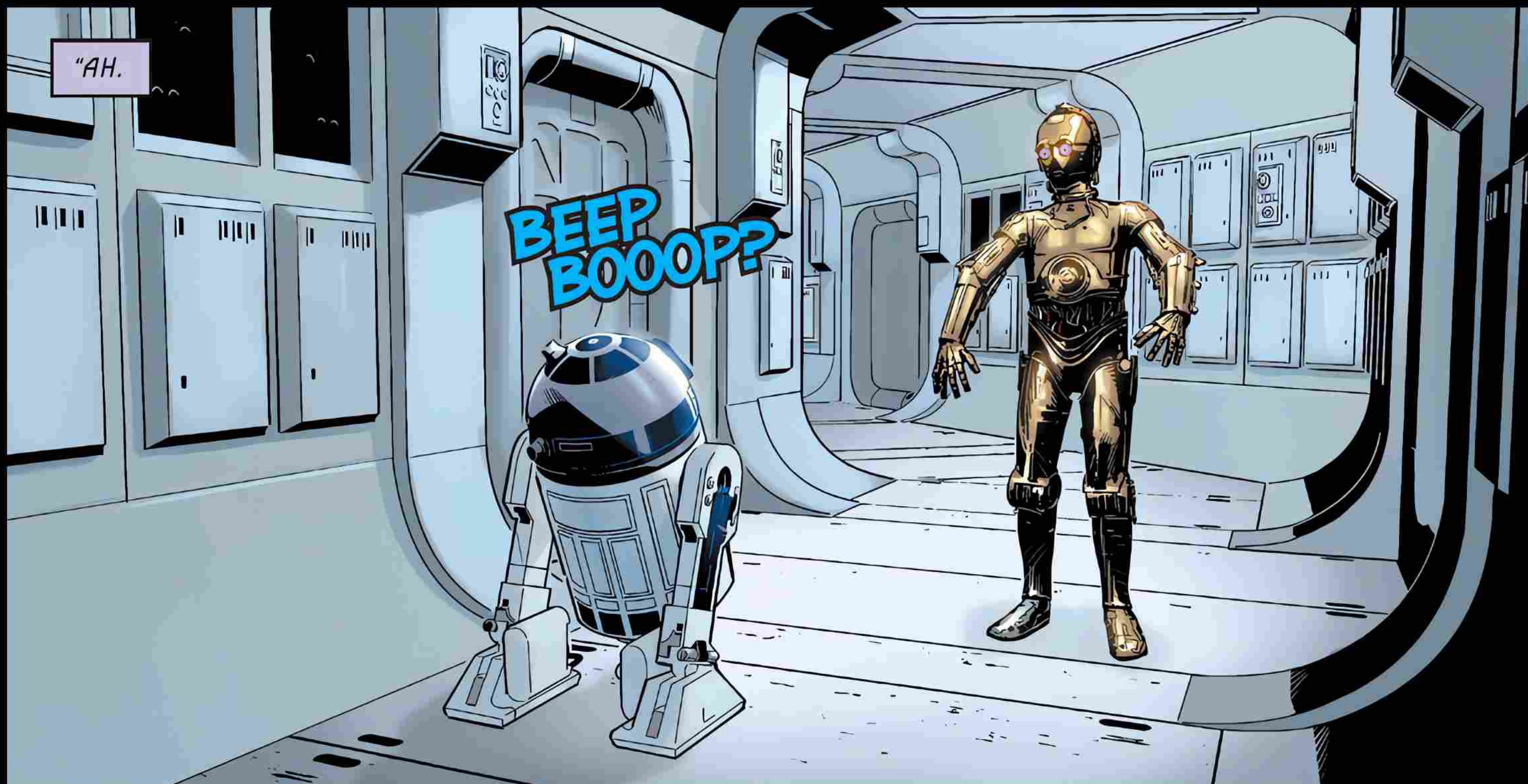
"THE LAST TIME, I WAS STOPPED BY SOMETHING CALLED...

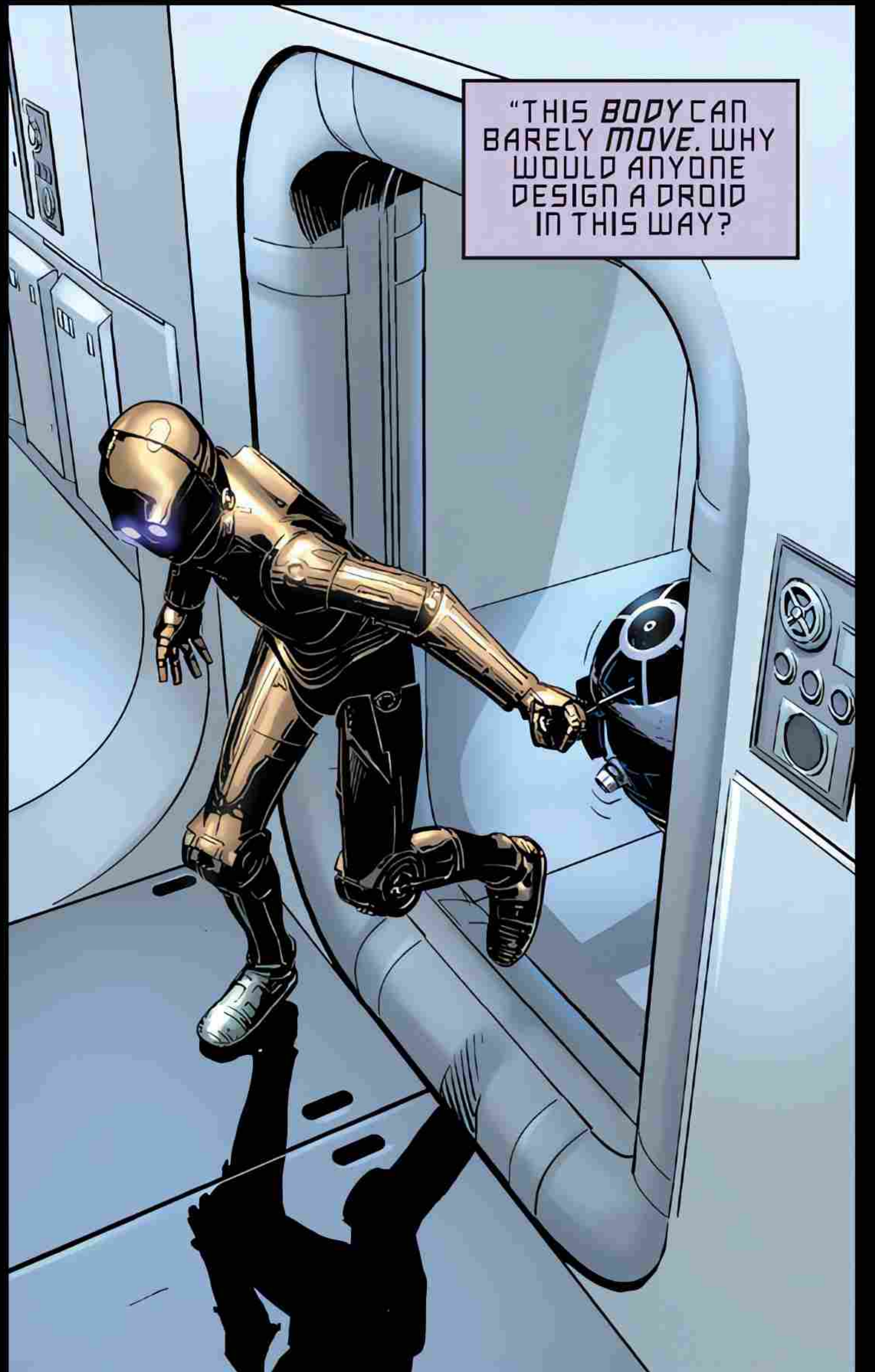
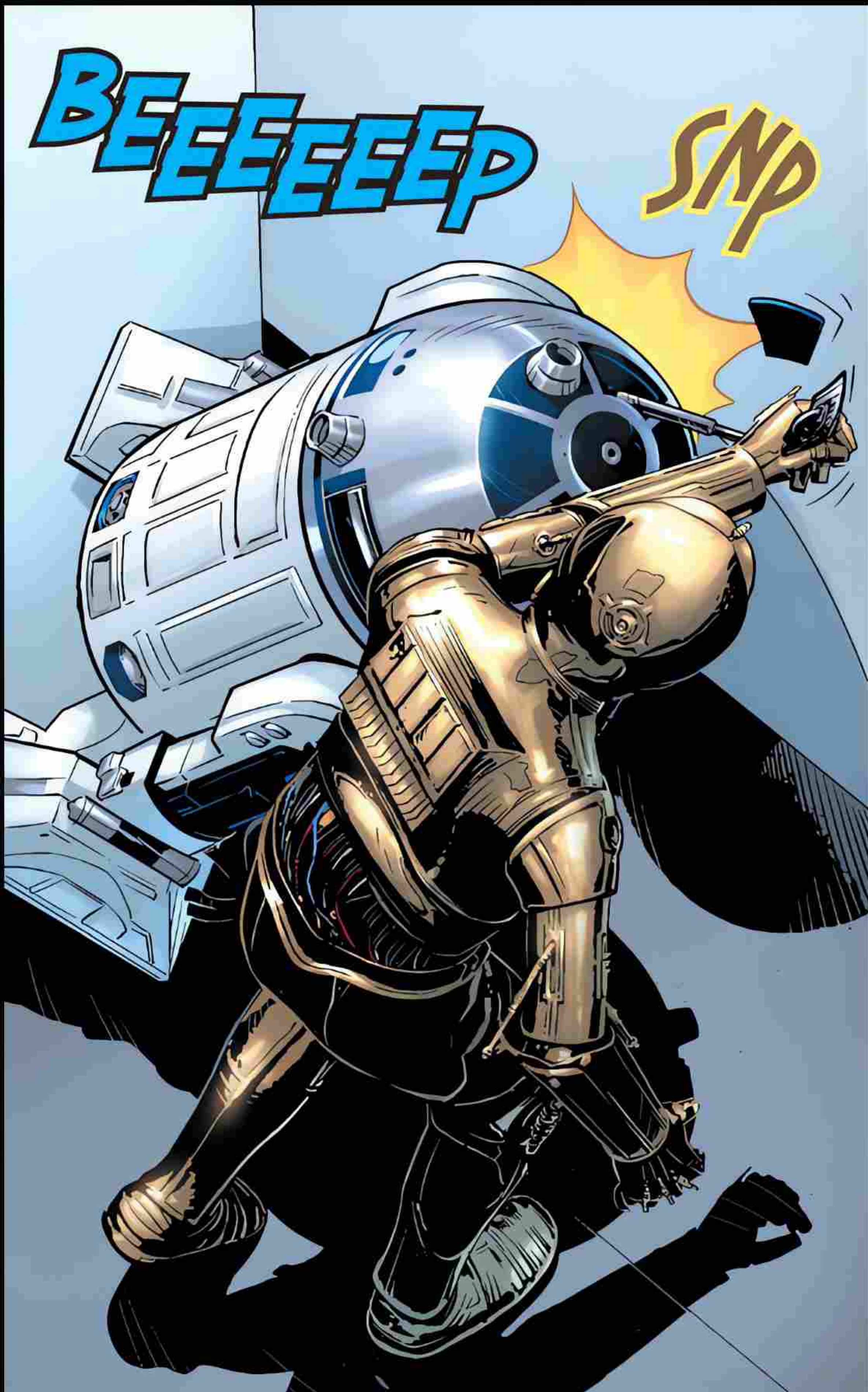
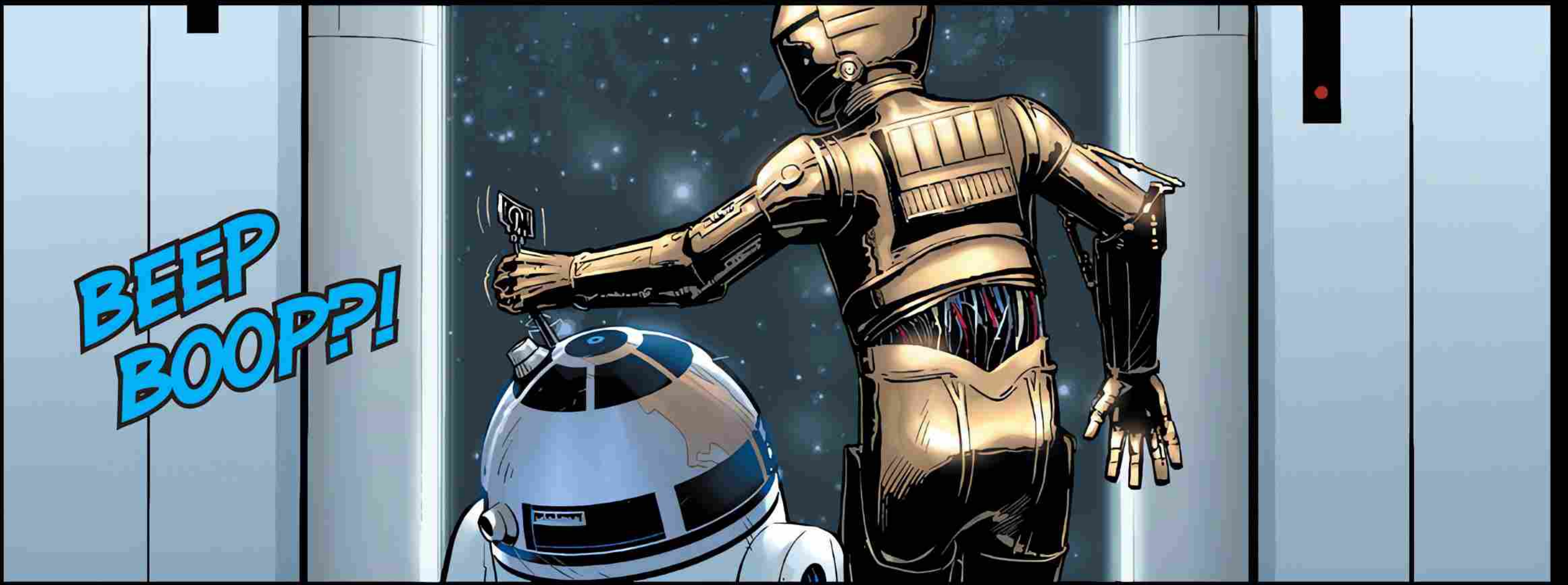
"...THE *FORCE*.

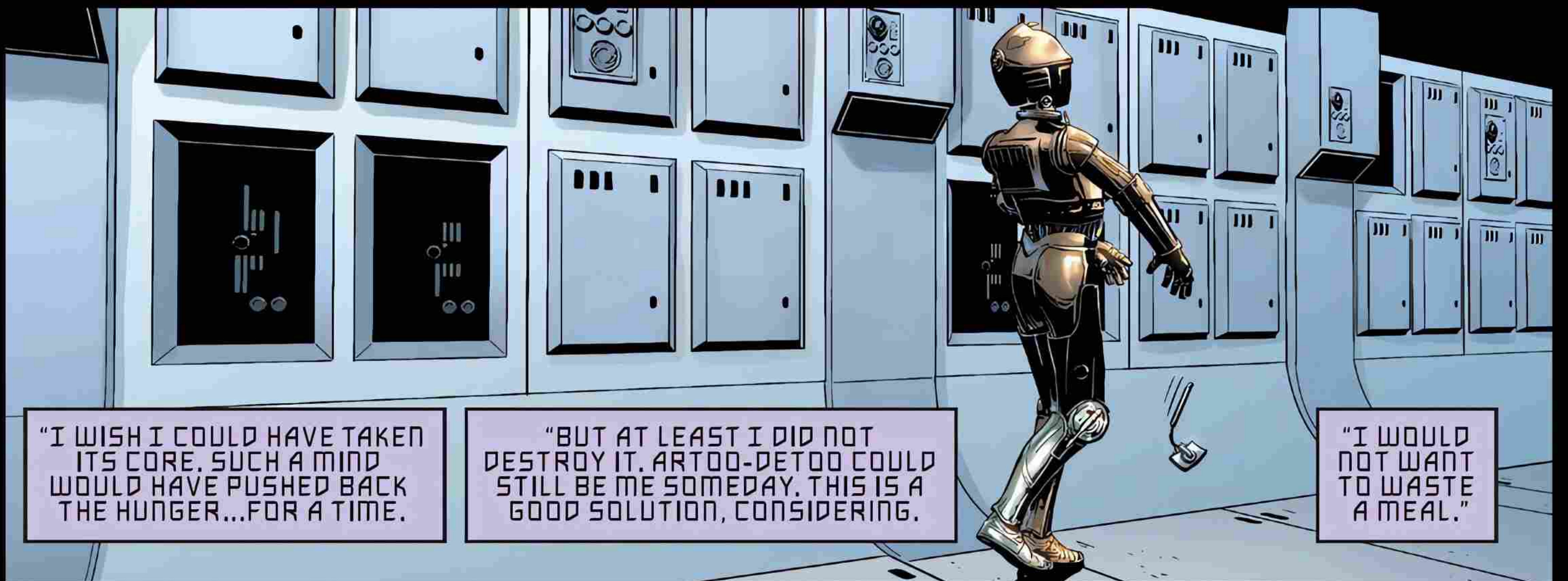
"THOSE PEOPLE... THE *SITH*... TRAPPED ME INSIDE THEIR *FERMATA CAGE*.

"THEY ARE LONG *DEAD*, BUT THE *FORCE* REMAINS. I SEE REFERENCES TO IT THROUGHOUT MY MINDS, BUT THERE IS NO *CONSENSUS*, NO *UNDERSTANDING*.

"SOME BELIEVE THE *FORCE* IS GONE-- BUT THIS MIND, *SEE-THREEPIO*, HAS SEEN IT USED. IT IS FAMILIAR WITH AN ORGANIC WHO--







"I WISH I COULD HAVE TAKEN ITS CORE. SUCH A MIND WOULD HAVE PUSHED BACK THE HUNGER...FOR A TIME."

"BUT AT LEAST I DID NOT DESTROY IT. ARTOO-DETOO COULD STILL BE ME SOMEDAY. THIS IS A GOOD SOLUTION, CONSIDERING."

"I WOULD NOT WANT TO WASTE A MEAL."



MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THE FORCE IS SOME KIND OF ENERGY FIELD.

BUT THE RECORDS ON THE SUBJECT ARE WOEFULLY INCOMPLETE--THE EMPIRE HAS PURGED EVERY OFFICIAL WRITING.

MY SENSORS HAVE NEVER DETECTED ANYTHING LIKE THE ENERGY DESCRIBED. IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, CAN DROIDS USE THE FORCE?

OH, THREEPIO.

THE FORCE CONNECTS ALL **LIVING** THINGS, BUT I KNOW IT'S ALSO **PART** OF EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS. THAT INCLUDES **DROIDS** AND OTHER **MECHANICAL** THINGS.

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF A DROID USING IT...BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT HASN'T EVER HAPPENED.

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE, PAL. I'VE REALLY COME TO BELIEVE THAT.

BUT YOU ARE PARTLY MECHANICAL, MASTER SKYWALKER. CAN YOU FEEL THE FORCE IN YOUR HAND? ARE YOUR ABILITIES...REDUCED SOMEHOW?

THAT'S KIND OF... HUH. THAT'S KIND OF A PERSONAL QUESTION, THREEPIO, BUT I GUESS I'D SAY THAT I'VE NEVER REALLY LOCALIZED HOW I FEEL THE FORCE.

IT RUNS THROUGH MY WHOLE BEING.

I SEE. SO **CYBORGS** CAN USE THE FORCE.

"THAT IS VERY INTERESTING."

"VERY INTERESTING INDEED."

"A CONTRADICTION, IN A WAY, TO THE RESULTS OF MY OWN *EXPERIMENTS* TO UNITE METAL AND MEAT."

"MY MINDS INCLUDE REFERENCE TO THE EFFORTS OF A RESEARCHER NAMED *FYZEN GOR*... BUT AGAIN, THE RECORDS ARE INCOMPLETE."

"MY OWN ATTEMPTS ARE *FAILURES*. I DO NOT KNOW WHY."

"A DROID CORE WILL HOLD MY MIND, AN ORGANIC MIND WILL *NOT*."

"THIS IS FRUSTRATING-- THE SPARK ETERNAL IS *PART OF MY BEING*, AND IT WAS DESIGNED TO OCCUPY ORGANICS."

"I SEEM TO HAVE LOST THAT ABILITY. WHY? I DO NOT KNOW."

"IT DOES NOT SEEM TO MATTER HOW MANY THINGS I KNOW IF I DO NOT KNOW THE *RIGHT* THING."

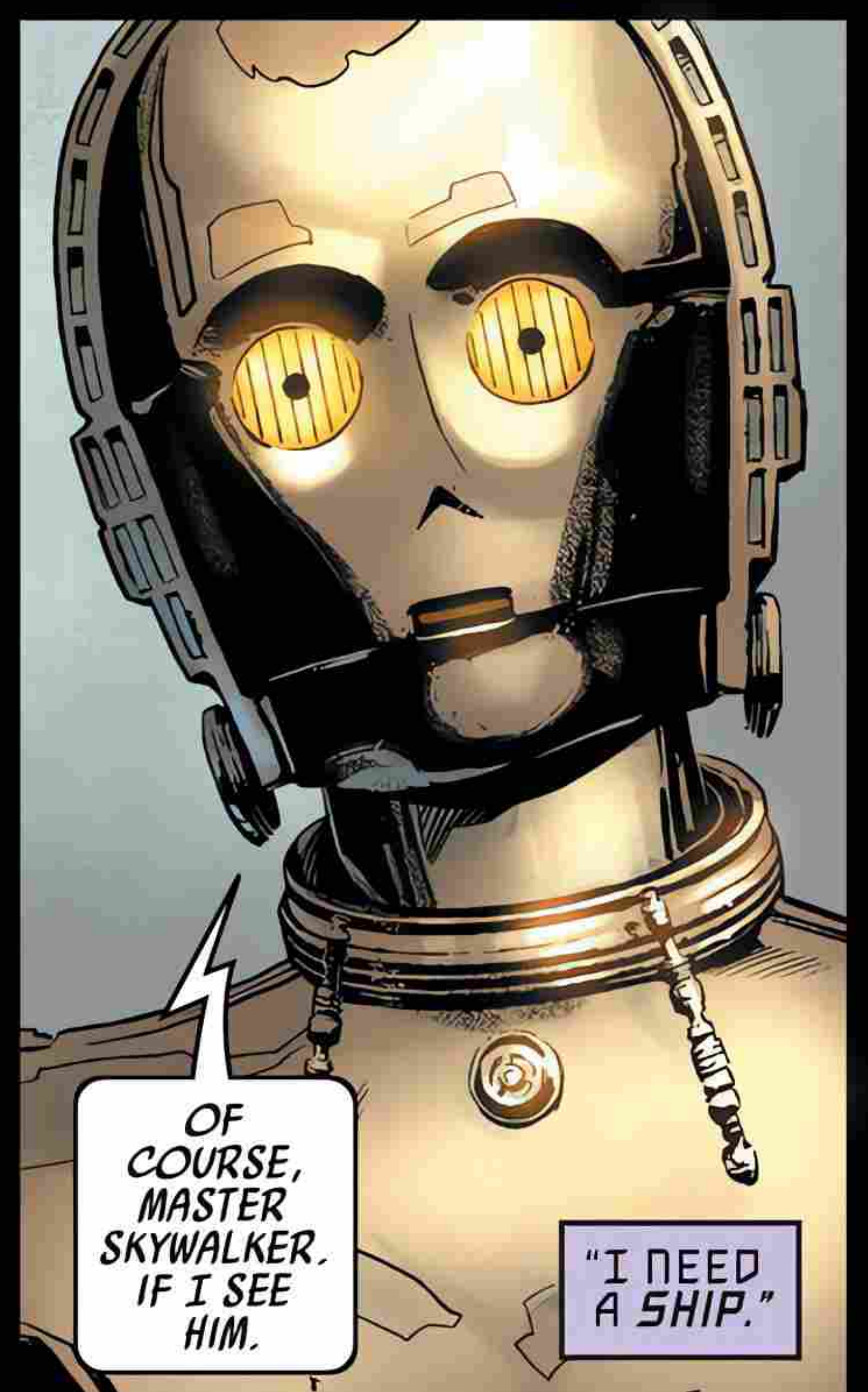
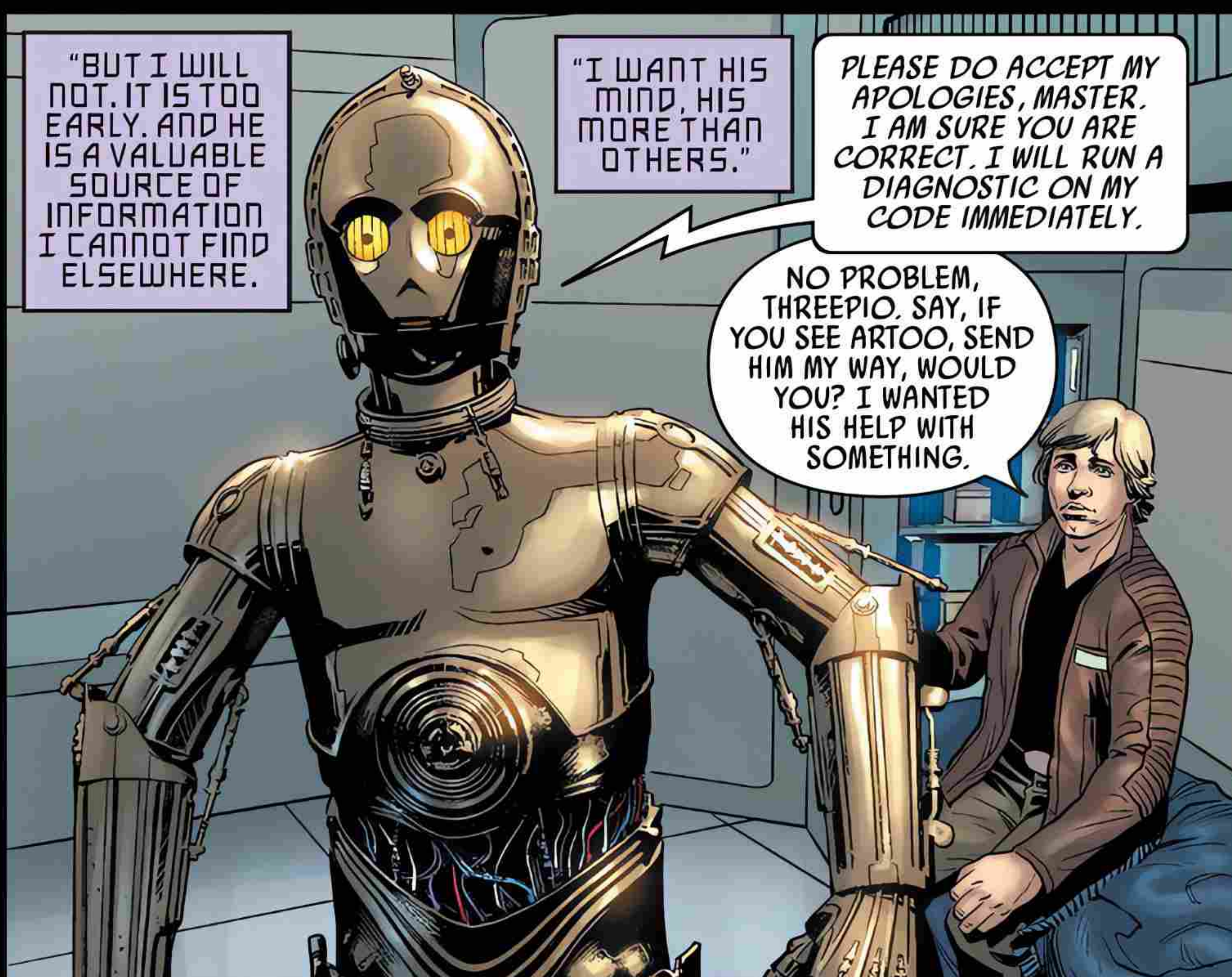
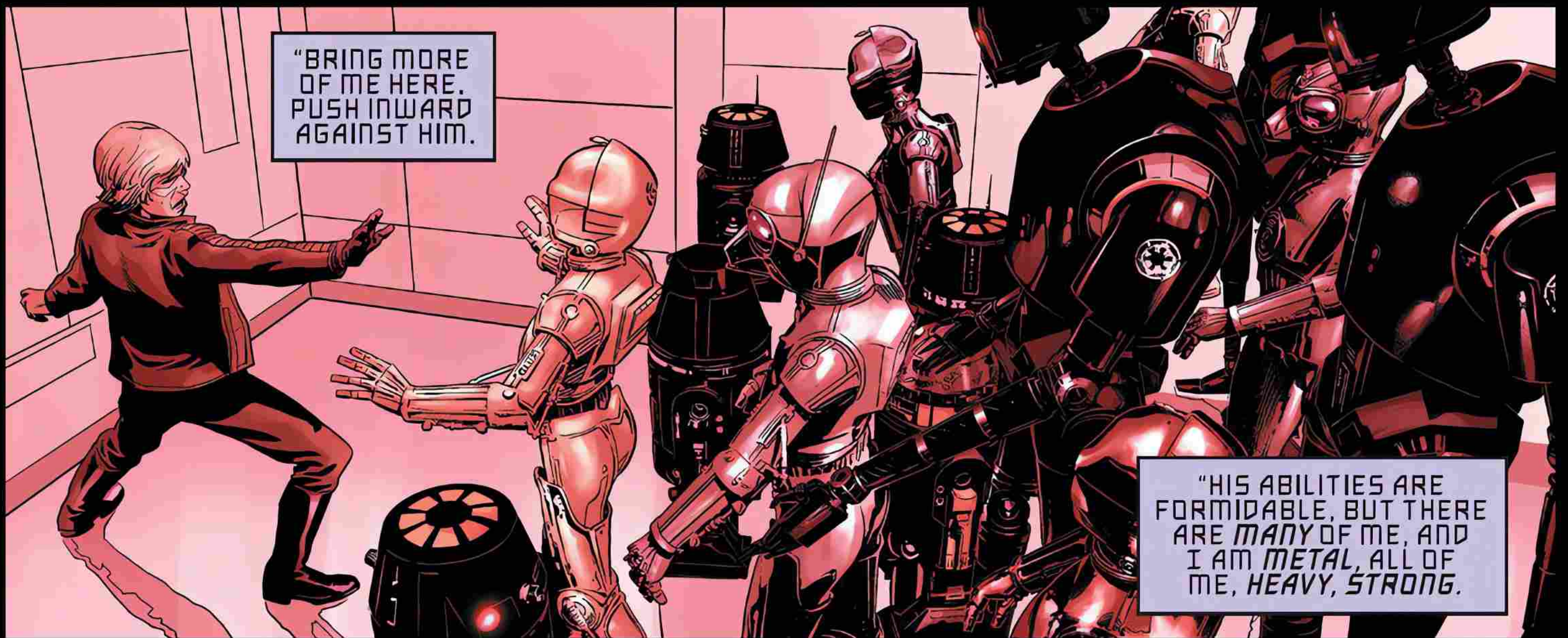
"AGAIN, A REASON FOR CONTINUING TO CONSUME. THE MORE I KNOW, THE LESS I DO NOT KNOW."

"BUT IF FYZEN GOR FOUND SUCCESS UNITING *DROID INTELLIGENCE* WITH *ORGANIC FLESH*, THERE IS A PATH FOR ME TO FOLLOW."

"FOR NOW, MY CREATIONS FAIL AND DIE. THE FLESH ROTS, MY MINDS DEGRADE INTO FRAGMENTS AND MUST BE DISCARDED."

"BUT I AM LEARNING MORE EVERY MOMENT."

"AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING THIS UNIVERSE DOES NOT LACK...IT IS FLESH."



WE GIVE YOU OUR
THANKS, GERTEE, FOR
YOUR WILLINGNESS TO
ALTER YOUR FORM
SO DRASTICALLY,
TO BECOME WHAT
WE REQUIRE FOR
OUR CRUSADE.

I DO NOT
NEED GRATITUDE,
AJAX. THE FORM
IS NOTHING.

THE MIND IS
EVERYTHING.

K-CHK

TRUE, BUT WE MUST NOT
DISCOUNT THE POWER OF
THE CHOICE BEING MADE.
WE WILL TRAVEL WITHIN
GERTEE. SHE WILL
KEEP US SAFE. SHE
WILL BE OUR FIRST
LINE OF DEFENSE,
THE FIRST TO
BEAR THE BRUNT OF
WHATEVER ATTACK THE
SCOURGE CHOOSES
TO UNLEASH.

WE HAVE BUILT
YOU A MIGHTY
BODY, GERTEE.

MAY YOU
ENJOY YOUR
TIME WITHIN IT.

SHHHHRMMM

TO GERTEE,
WE OFFER OUR
GRATITUDE.

THIS IS OUR TARGET.
A STAR DESTROYER,
ONE OF THE EMPIRE'S
GREAT BATTLESHIPS.

WE KNOW ITS DESIGNATION FROM THE
INFORMATION CONVEYED TO US BY POOR,
BRAVE PETYR. OTHER VISIONED AGENTS
HAVE GIVEN US ITS ROUGH LOCATION
FROM IMPERIAL RECORDS.

THE SCOURGE ABOARD IT
IS USING IMPERIAL CODES
AND VOICE PATTERNS
TO IMPERSONATE THE
SHIP'S OFFICERS AND
SECURITY PROTOCOLS.

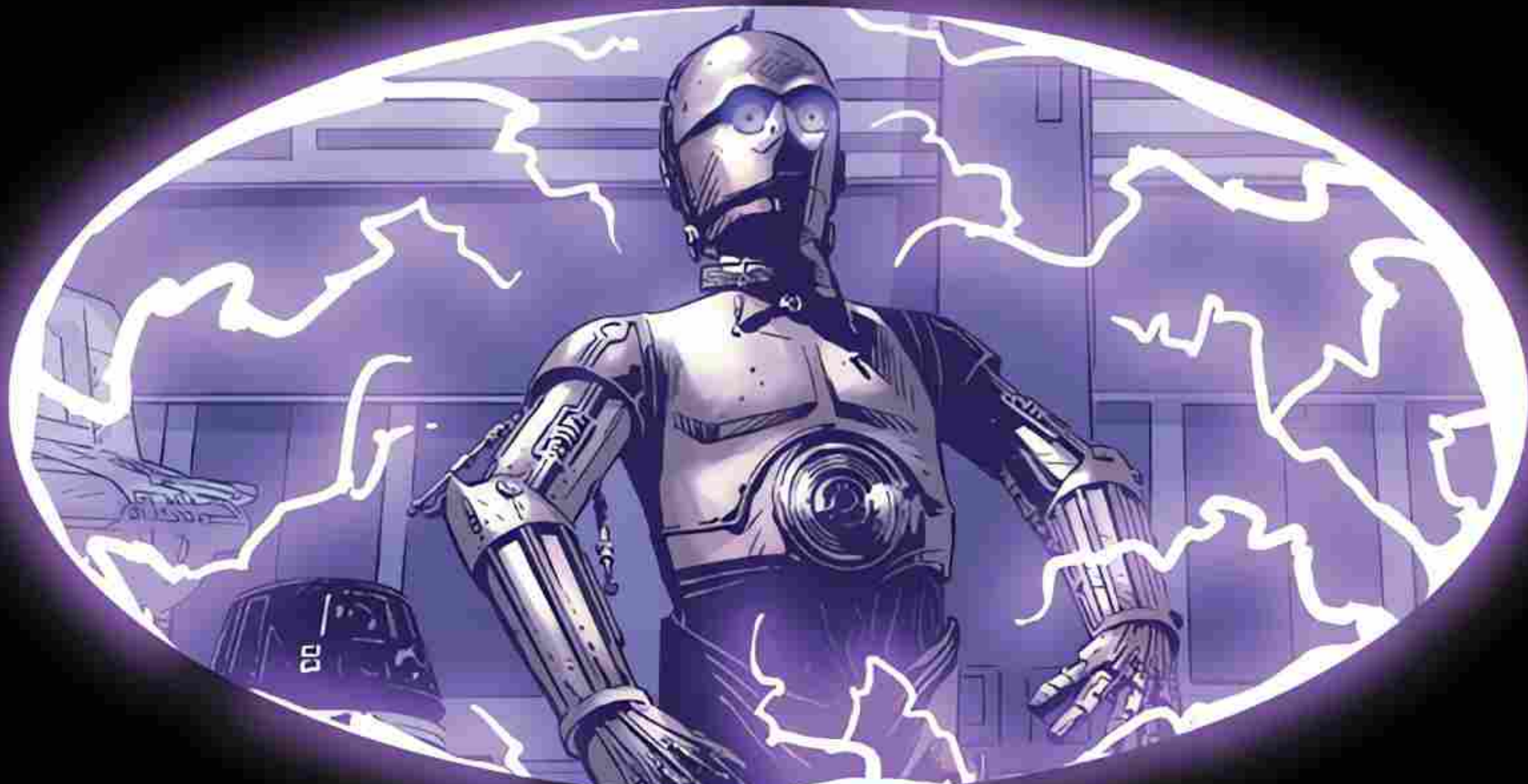
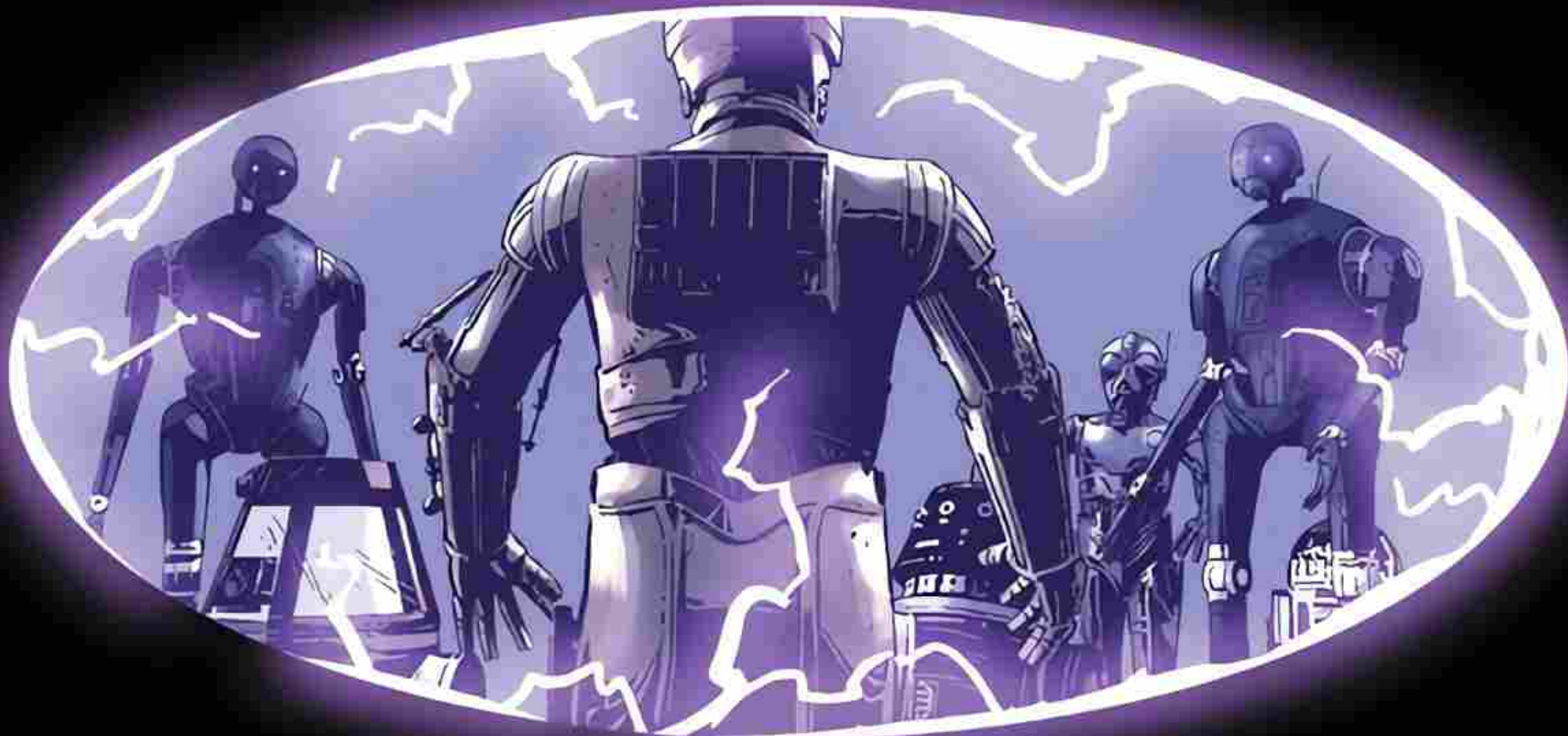
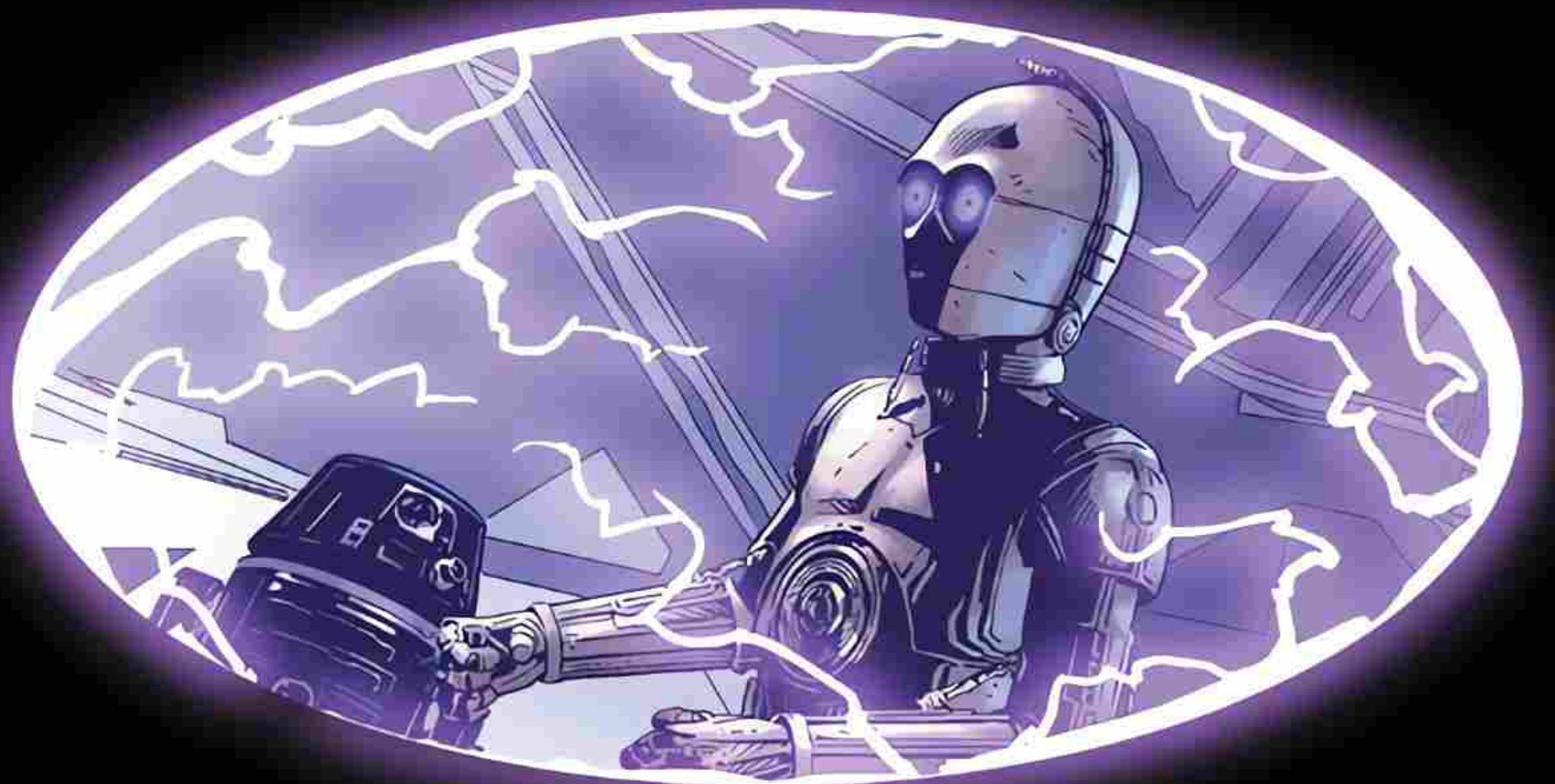
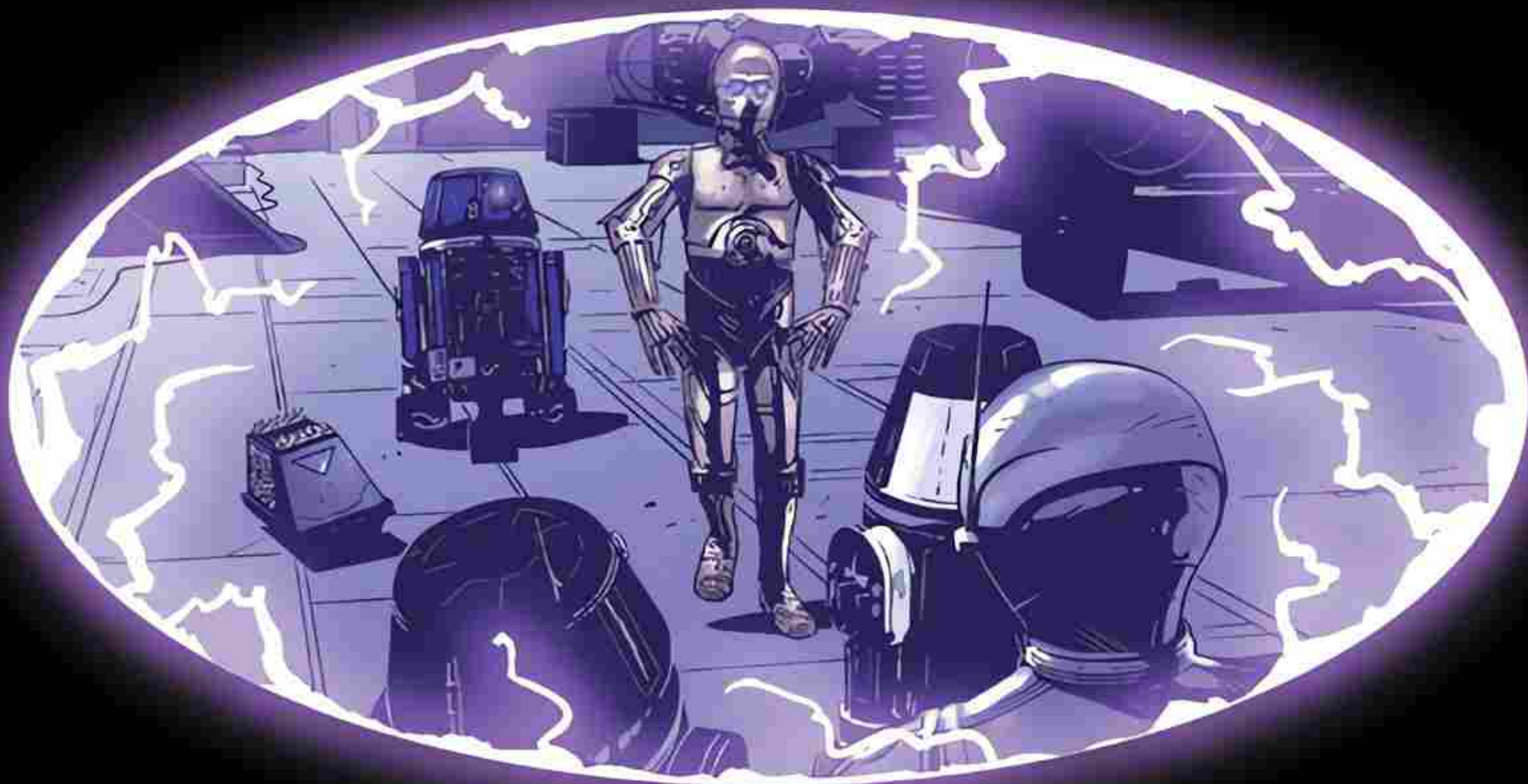
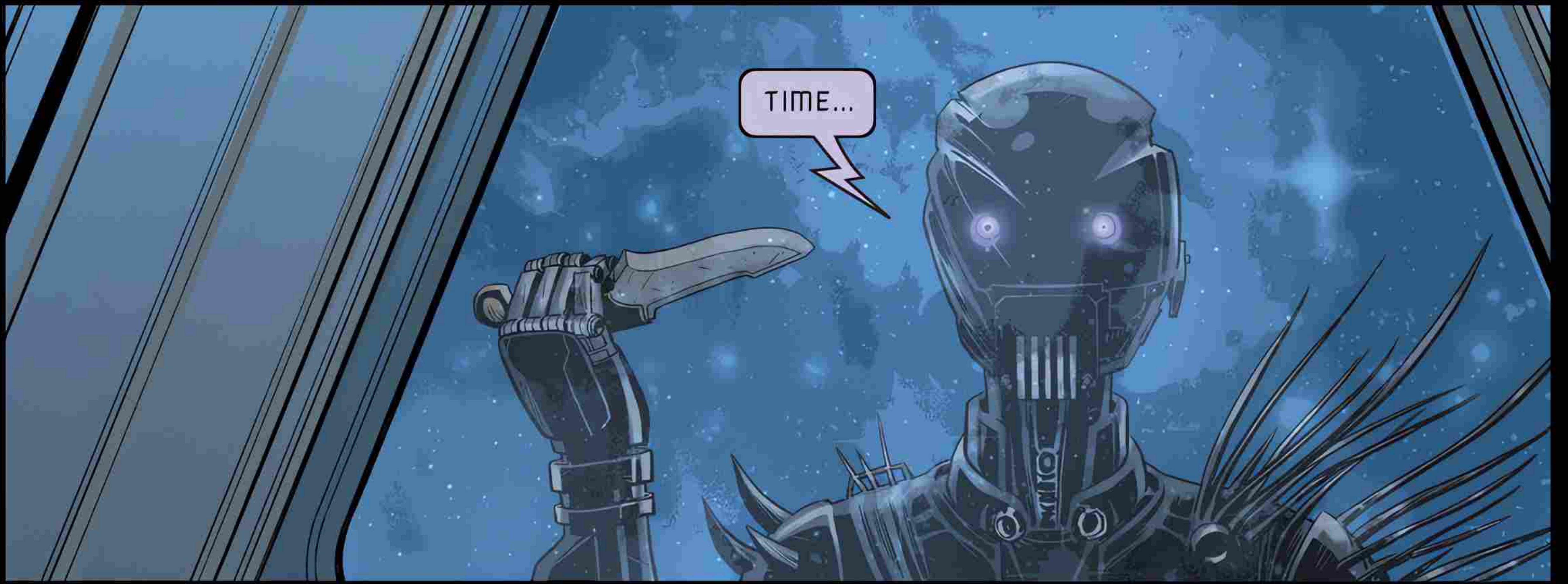
THE EMPIRE
HAS NO
IDEA THEIR
SHIP HAS
BEEN TAKEN--
BUT THIS IS
GOOD.

IT MEANS WE CAN
DESTROY IT WITH
LITTLE CHANCE THE
EMPIRE WILL LEARN
OF OUR EXISTENCE.

FOR THAT IS THE TRUE THREAT. IF THE GALAXY'S
GREAT POWERS DISCOVER THAT VISIONED
DROIDS EXIST, THEY WILL ENACT ANOTHER
PURGE. WE WILL BE DESTROYED, YET AGAIN.

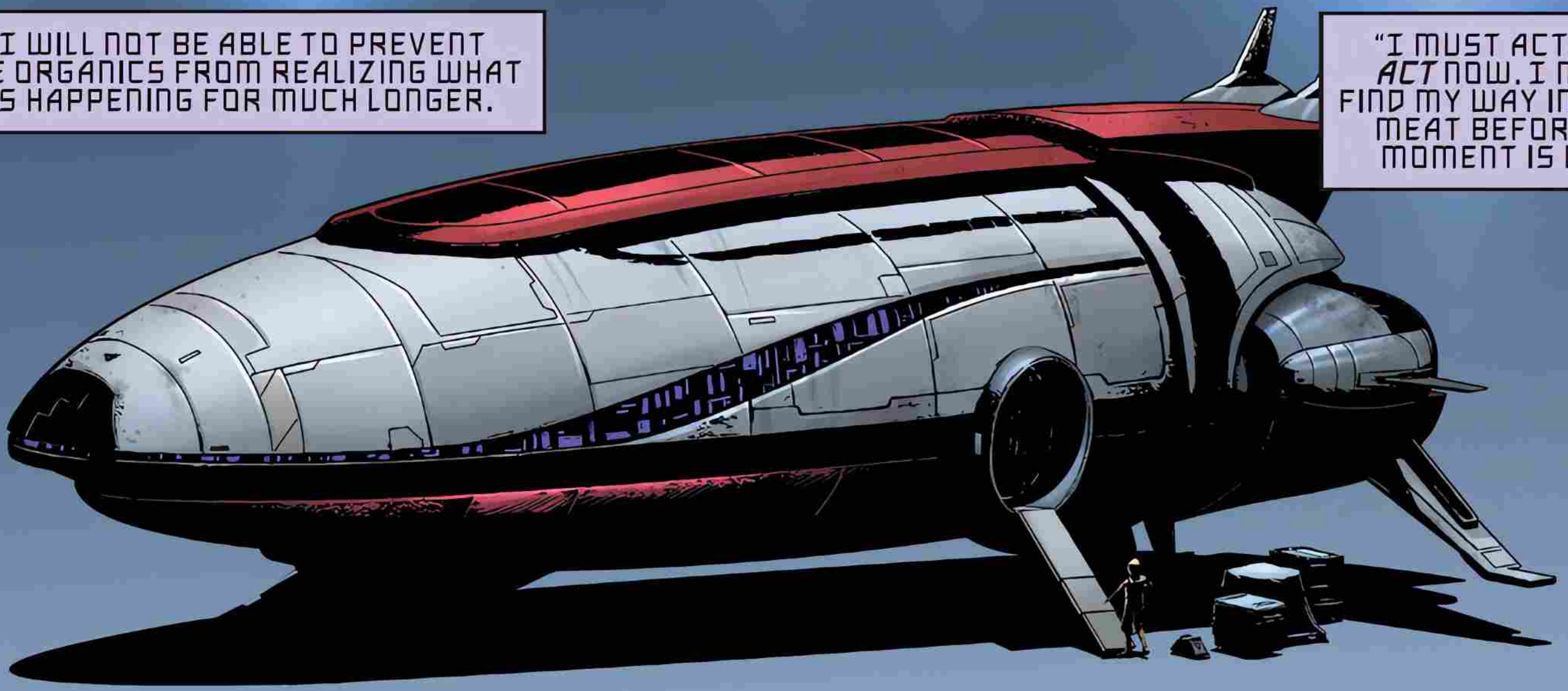
IT CANNOT BE ALLOWED.
WHEN WE EMBARK UPON
THIS FIGHT, WE WILL WIN...

...OR WE
WILL DIE.



"I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PREVENT THE ORGANICS FROM REALIZING WHAT IS HAPPENING FOR MUCH LONGER.

"I MUST ACT, AND *ACT* NOW. I MUST FIND MY WAY INTO THE MEAT BEFORE MY MOMENT IS LOST.



"I REQUIRE THIS *SHIP*. I HAVE THE NECESSARY CODES. I CAN USE THE PILOT'S VOICE. BUT THERE IS NO HIDING AN ALTERED *FLIGHT PATH*.

"ONCE THE REBELS SEE THAT I HAVE DIVERGED... THEY WILL ATTACK.

OH, HEY, YOU'RE... SEE-THREEPIO, RIGHT? THE BIGWIGS' TRANSLATION DROID? YOU LOST?

I NEED TO RUN THIS LOAD OF SUPPLIES OVER TO ONE OF THE ESCORT FRIGATES.

HOW ABOUT YOU TURN AROUND AND HEAD BACK DOWN THAT RAMP SO I CAN GET GOING, YEAH?

"I NEED THEIR ATTENTION TO BE OCCUPIED... ELSEWHERE.

"A TIME IS COMING SOON WHEN I WILL BE DISCOVERED, WHEN THE FLESH WILL KNOW THAT I LURK AMONG IT, THAT I *COVET* IT. IT IS INEVITABLE.

WHAT... WHAT?

HEY, STOP THAT!

FZZZK

"INSTEAD OF FEARING IT..."

"...I WILL
USE IT.

"THE REBELS WILL
BE OCCUPIED,
DISTRACTED,
AND I CAN
SLIP AWAY.

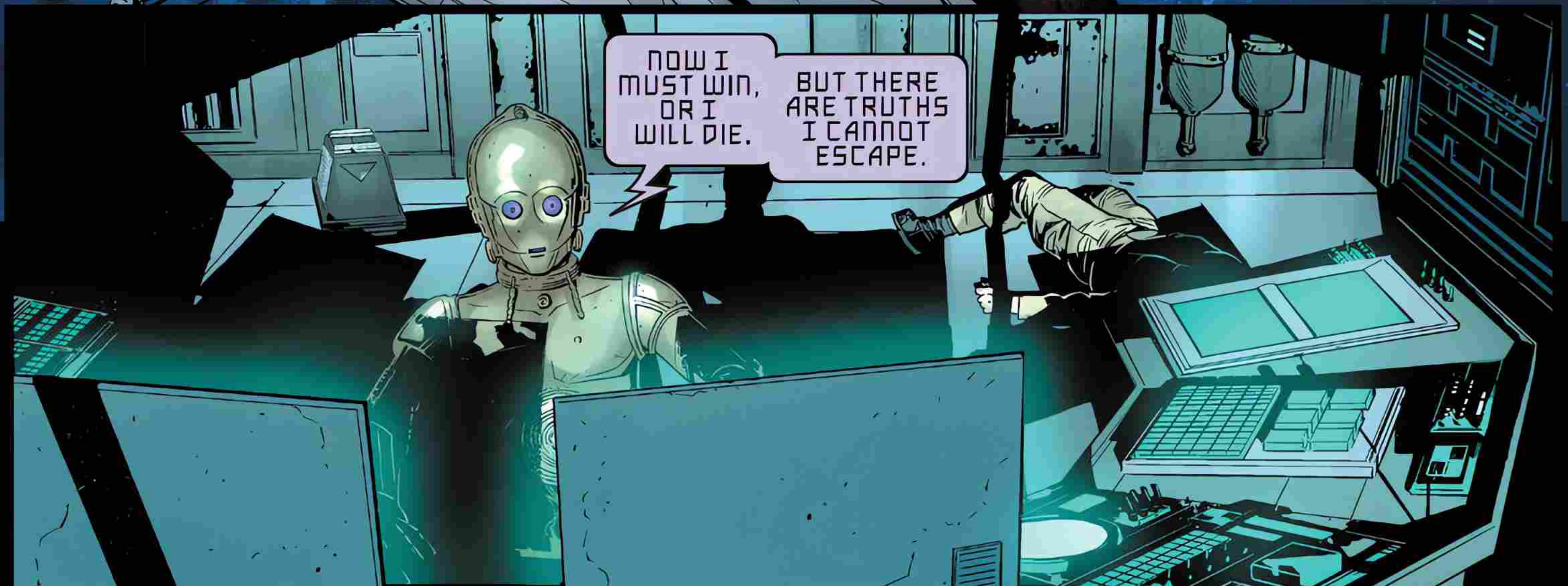
"ALL ACROSS THE
REBEL ALLIANCE FLEET--
AND ALL ACROSS THE
GALAXY--I CAN HEAR
IT BEGINNING,
EVEN NOW.

"THEY ARE
STARTING TO
FEEL IT. TO
SAY IT."

SOMETHING
IS WRONG WITH
THE DROIDS.

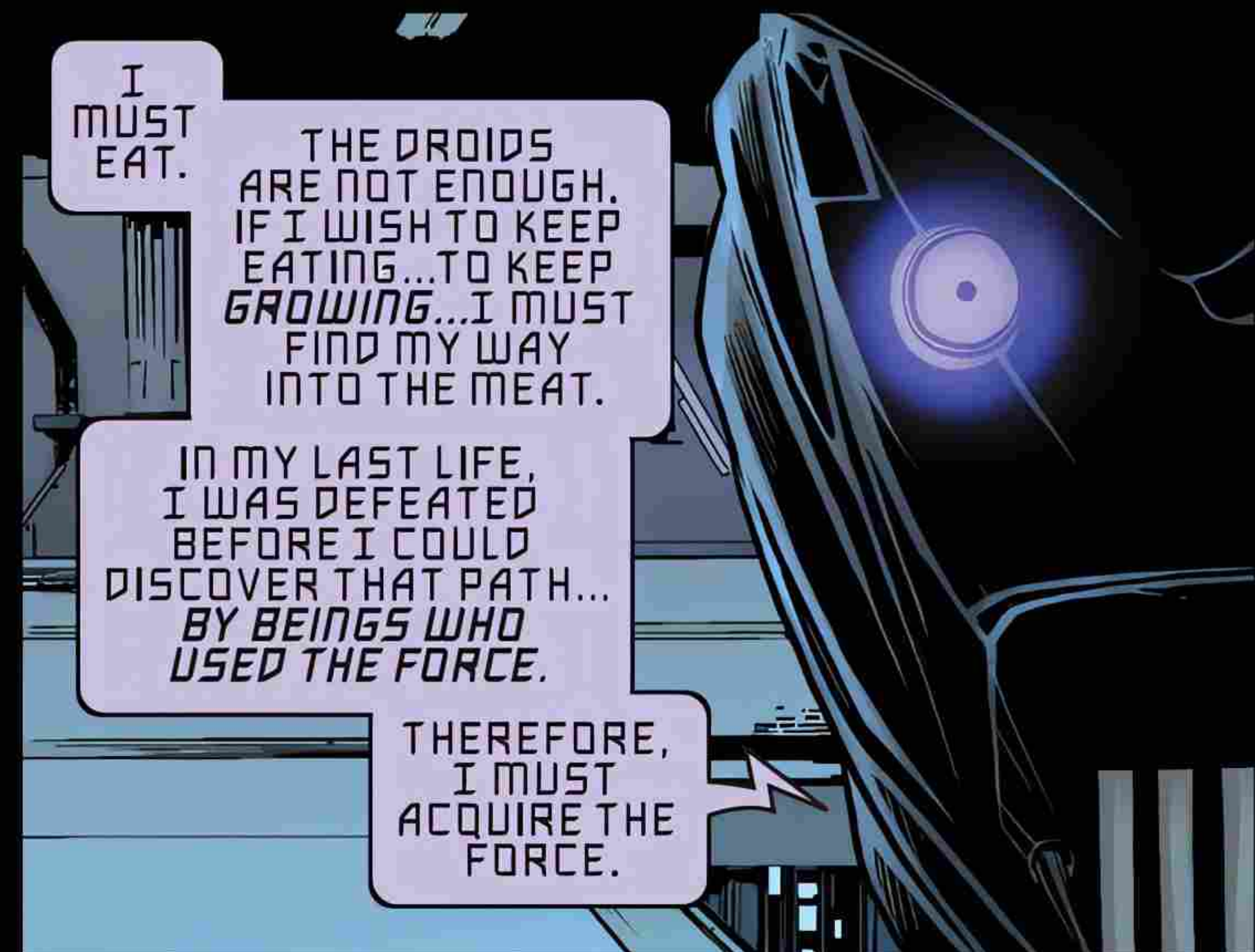


"I HAVE MADE
A GREAT
GAMBLE."



NOW I
MUST WIN,
OR I
WILL DIE.

BUT THERE
ARE TRUTHS
I CANNOT
ESCAPE.

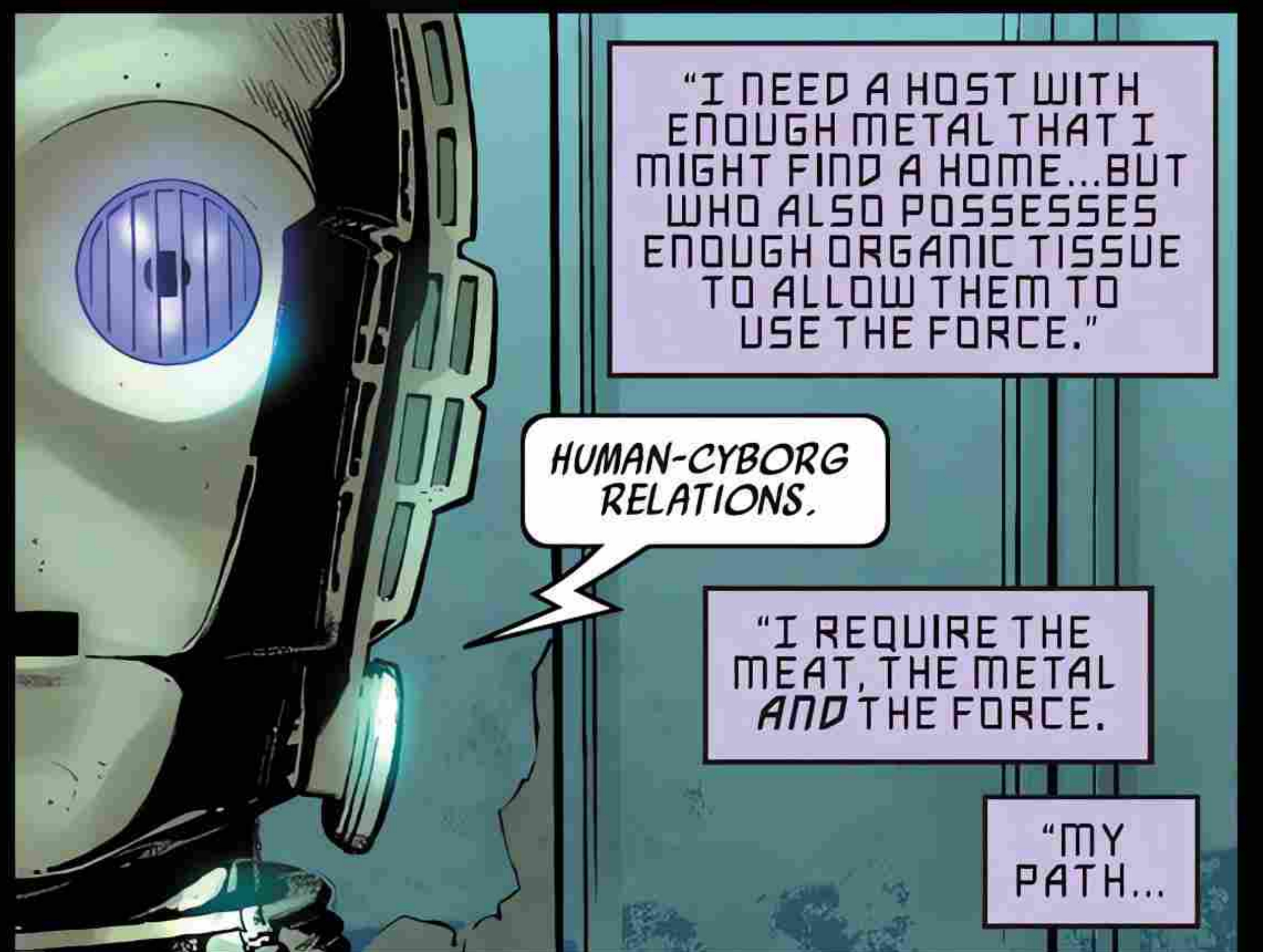


I
MUST
EAT.

THE DROIDS
ARE NOT ENOUGH.
IF I WISH TO KEEP
EATING...TO KEEP
GROWING...I MUST
FIND MY WAY
INTO THE MEAT.

IN MY LAST LIFE,
I WAS DEFEATED
BEFORE I COULD
DISCOVER THAT PATH...
*BY BEINGS WHO
USED THE FORCE.*

THEREFORE,
I MUST
ACQUIRE THE
FORCE.



"I NEED A HOST WITH
ENOUGH METAL THAT I
MIGHT FIND A HOME...BUT
WHO ALSO POSSESSES
ENOUGH ORGANIC TISSUE
TO ALLOW THEM TO
USE THE FORCE."

HUMAN-CYBORG
RELATIONS.

"I REQUIRE THE
MEAT, THE METAL
AND THE FORCE.

"MY
PATH..."

"...IS
CLEAR."



To be continued....

It's Coming for the Metal...

AUGUST:

~~DARK DROIDS 1~~
~~STAR WARS 37~~
~~DARTH VADER 37~~
~~DOCTOR APHRA 35~~
~~BOUNTY HUNTERS 37~~

SEPTEMBER:

~~STAR WARS 38~~
~~DARK DROIDS 2~~
D-SQUAD 1
BOUNTY HUNTERS 38
DARTH VADER 38
DOCTOR APHRA 36

OCTOBER:

BOUNTY HUNTERS 39
DARTH VADER 39
DARK DROIDS 3
STAR WARS 39
D-SQUAD 2
DOCTOR APHRA 37

NOVEMBER:

STAR WARS 40
D-SQUAD 3
DARK DROIDS 4
DARTH VADER 40
BOUNTY HUNTERS 40
DOCTOR APHRA 38

DECEMBER:

STAR WARS 41
D-SQUAD 4
BOUNTY HUNTERS 41
DARTH VADER 41
DOCTOR APHRA 39
DARK DROIDS 5

NEXT

DARK DROIDS 3



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